

**The feedback session within the context of teacher training and  
development: an analysis of discourse, role and function.**

**Diane Phillips**

**PhD, Institute of Education  
University of London**

**1999**



## **Abstract**

Lesson observation followed by feedback is commonly used within a wide range of teacher training and teacher development contexts. This study describes and compares the behaviour, as manifest in the discourse, within two sets of feedback sessions, and offers explanations for this behaviour. In the first type of feedback session trainers give feedback to trainees as part of a pre-service teacher training course. In the second, Directors of Studies give feedback to practising teachers, in the context of in-service teacher development.

The research methods employed led to analysis of data from both etic and emic perspectives. The conversations in the feedback sessions were video recorded, transcribed and analysed using the methodology of Conversation Analysis, and an etic perspective gained. In addition, in order to obtain an emic perspective, the perceptions of all the participants were obtained by means of interviews and questionnaires.

The findings of the study are as follows:

- Both sets of feedback session can be said to belong to the type of discourse described as ‘talk at work’. They contain features typical of other conversations identified in the literature as institutional talk, and differ significantly from informal or non-institutional conversations.
- The details of the discourse and differences between the two types of feedback session are created as a result of the way the participants perceive their roles and the function of the sessions. In turn, these perceptions and the resulting discourse are, to a large extent, shaped by the institutions for which they work.
- The final finding is that, in recursive fashion, the discourse serves to reinforce the perception of the roles and functions so that they become further institutionalised.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<b>Page</b>
<b>Title page</b>	1
<b>Abstract</b>	2
<b>Acknowledgements</b>	10
 <b>PART ONE: Introduction, Aims and Theoretical Background</b>	 11-63
<b>Chapter 1 Introduction and Purpose of the Study</b>	12
1.1 Background to observation and feedback	12
1.2 Two types of feedback session	14
1.2.1 The pre-service sessions	14
1.2.2 The in-service sessions	15
1.3 Aims and objectives of the study	15
 <b>Chapter 2 Genre and institutional talk</b>	 18
2.1 Genre	18
2.2 Genre within the work context	18
2.3 Institutional talk or ‘talk at work’	20
2.4 Features of institutional talk	21
 <b>Chapter 3 Methodology and Theoretical Framework for Analysis</b>	 23
3.1 Methodological framework	23
3.1.1 Identifying the characteristics of genre	23
3.1.2 The methodological problems	24
3.1.3 Conversation Analysis and related approaches	28
3.1.4 The Case Study	38
3.2 Tools of investigation: a review	40
3.2.1 Observation, recording and transcribing	40
3.2.2 Questionnaires and interviews	44
3.3 Collection and selection of data	46
3.3.1 Video recording	46
3.3.2 Transcription	49

3.3.3	Questionnaires and interviews used in the study	51
3.3.4	Selection of data	57
3.4	Terminology	57
3.4.1	Terms used in Conversation Analysis	58
3.4.2	Discourse Acts	59
3.5	Summary of Chapter 3: Methodology and theoretical framework for analysis	60
<b>PART TWO: The Feedback Session as Institutional Talk: Conversation Analysis</b>		64-207
<b>Chapter 4</b>	<b>The participants and the context</b>	67
4.1	The participants: their background, role and power	67
4.1.1	The participants: their background, role and power within the institutional context	67
4.1.2	The Participants: their background, role, and power within the feedback session	71
4.2	The physical context within which the conversations take place	75
4.2.1	The physical context and institutional talk	75
4.2.2	The physical context: the feedback session	76
4.3	The temporal context	77
4.3.1	The temporal context and institutional talk	77
4.3.2	The temporal context and the feedback session	78
4.4	The setting, and orientation of the participants	82
4.4.1	The setting, and orientation of the participants: institutional talk	82
4.4.2	The setting, and orientation of the participants: the feedback session	83
4.5	The participants and the context: summary and conclusions	85



<b>Chapter 5</b>	<b>Overall structure and organisation of the talk</b>	<b>87</b>
5.1	Overall structure and organisation of institutional talk	87
5.2	Overall structure and organization of the talk: the feedback session	90
5.2.1	Participation	91
5.2.2	Patterns of interaction	92
5.3	Overall structure and organisation of the talk: summary and conclusions	94
 <b>Chapter 6</b>	 <b>Conversation Management</b>	 <b>95</b>
6.1	Turn-taking	95
6.1.1	Turn-taking in institutional talk	95
6.1.2	Turn-taking in the feedback session	97
6.2	Topic choice and topic management	101
6.2.1	Topic choice and management in institutional talk	101
6.2.2	Topic choice and management in the feedback session	102
6.3	Conversation management: summary and conclusions	111
 <b>Chapter 7</b>	 <b>Conversational patterning</b>	 <b>113</b>
7.1	Openings and closings	113
7.1.1	Openings and closings in institutional talk	113
7.1.2	Openings and closings in the feedback session	114
7.2	Formulating and summarising	118
7.2.1	Formulating and summarising in institutional talk	118
7.2.2	Formulating and summarising in the feedback session	119
7.3	Conversational patterning: summary and conclusions	123

<b>Chapter 8</b>	<b>Discourse acts</b>	124
8.1	Initiating Acts	126
8.1.1	Elicitations	126
	a) Questions	127
	b) Elicitations	137
8.1.2	Informatives	142
	a) Reports	143
	b) Assessments:	148
	criticism	154
	compliments	170
	self-criticism	176
	self-commendation	180
8.1.3	Directives: mandates; advisives	183
8.1.4	Initiating Acts: summary and conclusions	185
8.2	Response	186
8.2.1	Continuers, and third-turn responses	186
	a) Continuers	186
	b) Third-turn responses	189
8.2.2	Silence as response	191
8.2.3	Response: summary and conclusions	193
<b>Chapter 9</b>	<b>Particular features of the discourse</b>	194
9.1	The use of on-record language and particular politeness strategies	194
9.1.1	The use of on-record language and particular politeness strategies in institutional talk	194
9.1.2	The use of on-record language and particular politeness strategies within the feedback session	196
9.2	Lexical choice	197
9.2.1	Lexical choice in institutional talk	197
9.2.2	Lexical choice in the feedback session	198
9.3	Particular features of the discourse: summary and conclusions	199

<b>Chapter 10</b>	<b>The feedback session as institutional talk</b>	200
10.1	Participants and context	201
10.2	Overall structure and organisation of the talk; conversation management and conversational patterning	202 203
10.3	Discourse Acts	204
10.4	Particular features of the discourse	204
10.5	Features of institutional talk not found in the feedback session	204
10.6	Degree of formality	204
10.7	The feedback session as institutional talk: conclusions	206
 <b>PART THREE:</b>	 <b>The participants' perspective and conclusions</b>	 208-266
 <b>Chapter 11:</b>	 <b>Role and function</b>	 210
11.1	Methodological approach: the use of evidence from interviews and questionnaires	211
11.2	Role	212
11.2.1	Orientation to the setting and recognition of set roles	212
11.2.2	Role and power	214
11.2.3	Role and the 'knowledge gap'	215
11.2.4	Role, power and knowledge: conclusions	219
11.3	Perception of the function of the feedback sessions	220
11.3.1	Evaluation	221
11.3.2	Positive versus negative evaluation	222
11.3.3	Expectation and function	223
11.3.4	A direct comparison between pre-course and in-course sessions conducted by the same assessor	229
11.3.5	Perception of function: conclusions	232
11.4	Discourse, role and function: conclusions	234

<b>Chapter 12: Talk and the institution</b>	236
12.1 The influence of the institution on discourse	236
12.1.1 The influence of institution: a review of the literature	237
12.1.2 The influence of the institution on the discourse of the feedback session	239
12.1.3 Ways in which knowledge and practice is passed on by ELT institutions	247
12.1.4 Ways in which knowledge and practice is passed on to the trainers and Directors of Studies in the study	252
12.1.5 The influence of the institution: conclusions	254
12.2 The reciprocal relationship between discourse and the institution	255
12.2.1 The reciprocal relationship between discourse and the institution: a review of the literature	255
12.2.2 Reciprocity within the feedback session	258
12.2.3 The reciprocal relationship between discourse and the institution within the feedback session: conclusions	260
 <b>Chapter 13: Overall conclusions</b>	261
13.1 Summary of research findings	261
13.2 Evaluation of the methodology	261
13.3 Limitations of the study	262
13.4 Implications for further research and action	264
 <b>Bibliography</b>	267
<b>List of Figures</b>	
Figure 1 Linguistic focus - Sociological focus	28
Figure 2 Primary features of the discourse process	32
Figure 3 Taxonomy of Discourse Acts	57
Figure 4 Initiating Acts	124
Figure 5 Cascade Model of Teacher Training	248
Figure 6 Becoming a teacher: influential people (impression of relative importance)	250

## **Appendices**

<b>Appendix 1</b>	Transcript of Pre-service Feedback Session 1	277
<b>Appendix 2</b>	Transcript of In-Service Feedback Session A	287
<b>Appendix 3</b>	Pre-service sessions:	297
	Table 1 Details of participants	298
	Table 2 Response to Interview Question 1	300
	Table 3 Response to Interview Question 2	302
	Table 4 Response to Interview Question 3	303
	Table 5 Response to Interview Questions 4 and 5	304
	Table 6 Response to Interview Question 6	307
	Table 7 Replies to questionnaires	309
<b>Appendix 4</b>	In-service sessions:	313
	Table 8 Details of participants	313
	Table 9 Response to Interview Question 1	315
	Table 10 Response to Interview Question 2	316
	Table 11 Response to Interview Question 3	317
	Table 12 Response to Interview Questions 4 and 5	318
	Table 13 Response to Interview Question 6	320
	Table 14 Replies to questionnaires	322
<b>Appendix 5</b>	Feedback Form used in In-Service Sessions	326

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost I would like to thank all the participants in the study who submitted themselves to scrutiny, and took time to answer my questions. Without them the research could not have been done.

I am also grateful to my colleagues at the Bell Educational Trust, The Bell Language School, Cambridge and The Bell Young Learners' Courses Department for their practical help and support; particular thanks go to Malcolm Hebden, Alison Shaw, Will Sykes, Marian Lock and Richard Rossner.

I would also like to thank my supervisor at the Institute of Education, David Block, who has given invaluable advice and encouragement, and Henry Widdowson and John Norrish for their helpful comments.

Finally, thanks go to my husband Andrew and my children, Ben and Meredith, who never doubted that the work would one day be finished.

The Lesson Feedback Form (Appendix 5) is included with the permission of the Bell Educational Trust.

## **PART ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION, AIMS AND THEORETICAL BACKGROUND**

In Part One, in the first chapter, I introduce the context of the study, that of teacher training and development within the discipline of English Language Teaching, and I explain my interest and involvement in the area. In Chapter 1 I also set out the aims and objectives of the study.

Chapter 2 is concerned with a discussion of genre. One of the aims of the research is to investigate whether the feedback session, conducted as part of teacher training and development, can be seen as a particular genre that can be included within the broader category of ‘institutional talk’.

The third chapter in Part One details the methodology adopted in the study and the theoretical framework for analysis.

## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE OF STUDY**

### **1.1 Background to Observation and Feedback**

Lesson observation followed by feedback is commonly used within a wide range of teacher training and teacher development contexts. It is a common practice within my area of experience and expertise, that of training and managing teachers of English as a Second (ESL) or Foreign Language (EFL) or, as it is increasingly known, English Language Teaching (ELT).

All recognised teacher training schemes in the UK that contain teaching practice (TP) for trainees use lesson observation, followed by feedback. Many schools and institutions also employ the practice as part of their on-going in-service monitoring, training, and development of the teachers they employ. The observation may form part of an appraisal scheme operated by the institution.

The procedure of observation is given further prominence in ELT schools and further education institutions and departments in the UK by the fact that, during an inspection, the British Council inspectors observe all teachers in order to determine whether a centre has reached the overall standard of teaching required in order to gain British Council accreditation.

My interest in the topic stems from a number of sources. As a teacher trainer I am interested in the effectiveness of lesson observation and feedback in developing teacher awareness and skills, and as a manager within an institution that provides English language teaching I have an interest in the usefulness of the practice as a management tool to monitor, maintain and further quality standards.

The feedback session as a topic for research was first suggested by comments from one of my fellow students on my MA course about how his memory of feedback during his initial training was that of fear and humiliation. For my MA dissertation (Phillips 1993) I



researched the language used to give positive and negative criticism by a number of trainers on initial training courses, and how such criticism was received by the trainees. I found that, overwhelmingly, the language used in speech act terms could be described as that of negative criticism but, despite this, the reaction by the majority of those receiving feedback was that it was a useful and positive experience. My conclusions were that the perception of the experience as negative or positive seemed to depend very much on the expectations of the trainees, and on the relationship between the person giving and the person receiving feedback.

I was interested to find out whether, in an in-service context, the language used by academic managers to give feedback to more experienced teachers, and the attitudes of the participants, are similar or different from those on a pre-service training course. I wished to explore further the influences brought to bear on the conversation by the participants' perceptions of their roles and their understanding of the purpose of the feedback session.

Several issues were raised by the MA research project which were not focused on in detail, as they were outside the remit of the study: for example, the power relationships between the participants; the overall organisation of the talk; the occurrence of certain patterns and sequences within the conversations. It struck me that the conversation could be seen as being very similar to many other institutional conversations and that it would be useful to compare the feedback session in a systematic manner with such institutional conversations as business meetings, doctors' consultancies, interviews, appraisals and even law court proceedings.

The broad aims of this research are to describe and compare the behaviour, as manifest in the discourse, that takes place within pre-service and in-service sessions, and to offer explanations for this behaviour. Before detailing the aims and objectives of the study, in *Section 1.2* I describe the two types of feedback session.

## 1.2 Two types of feedback session

In this study two types of feedback session are the focus of research:

- those taking place within a *pre-service* teacher training course
- those taking place as part of *in-service* teacher development.

### 1.2.1 The pre-service sessions

The participants in the pre-service sessions were taking part in teacher training courses leading to the CTEFLA (Certificate for Teaching English as a Foreign Language to Adults). The courses were held at The Bell Language School, Cambridge, part of The Bell Educational Trust - a major provider of ELT courses and services. The trainers on the courses were employed by this school. The awarding body for the qualification was UCLES (University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate).

UCLES runs the most widely recognised courses which prepare teachers of ELT: the CTEFLA (Certificate in Teaching English as a Foreign Language to Adults), since 1996 known as CELTA (Certificate of English Language Teaching to Adults), and DELTA (Diploma in English Language Teaching to Adults), formally known as DTEFLA (Diploma in Teaching English as a Foreign Language to Adults). The UCLES pre-service certificate is the most common qualification held by native speaker, and increasingly non-native speaker, teachers of English as a foreign or second language. In 1997 5300 candidates world-wide completed the course successfully.

A major component of the course is that of *teaching practice*. Within teaching practice the manner in which trainee teachers perform during lesson observation and feedback constitutes an important element in the formal assessment of the candidates. Assessed teaching practice takes place in groups of 4-6 trainees, under the supervision of a trainer. Each trainee's lesson is observed by the other trainees and the trainer. A session then takes place in which all the trainees who have taught that day are given oral feedback. In addition, written feedback on the lesson is given to each trainee by the trainer.

The trainers are teachers of EFL who have been selected as suitable to be trainers by the institutions for which they work. The type and degree of formal training they receive

before they take on this role can vary widely from institution to institution. None is directly provided before the course by the examining body itself. UCLES now requires new trainers to have observed at least one course and to have been briefed and advised by a practising trainer in the scheme. However, none of the trainers who are the subject of this study undertook such formal training as they became trainers before such a requirement was made obligatory.

Throughout this study the participants in the pre-service sessions will be referred to as *trainers* and *trainees*.

### **1.2.2 *The in-service sessions***

The in-service sessions in this study are those in which academic managers (Directors of Studies) observe and give feedback to teachers on a one-to-one basis. All the Directors of Studies and teachers in this study were employed by the Bell Educational Trust, to work on short courses for children and teenagers (age range from 8-17) who were studying English in the UK. The participants in these sessions will be referred to as *DOSs* (Directors of Studies) and *teachers*.

## **1.3 Aims and objectives of the study**

The study describes how the participants - the trainers, trainees, DOSs and teachers - behaved in the feedback sessions; it gives examples of language from the two different situations. In general terms, “the interesting aspect of verbal interaction is the way in which grammatical units such as sentences and clauses are used functionally by speakers to achieve social ends” (Coulthard and Ashby 1976:69). This is, above all, a study of language, the functions the language performs, and an attempt to identify the beliefs and attitudes that inform such language.

The three major aims of the study are as follows.

- To describe and analyse conversations taking place within two sets of feedback sessions and to examine to what extent they exhibit features of ‘institutional talk’: to assess to what extent the feedback sessions contain features typical of other examples of talk at work, and how they differ from informal or non-institutional conversation. To determine to what extent the feedback session can be said to belong to the type of discourse described as ‘talk at work’.
- To examine to what extent the discourse of the feedback session is created as a result of:
  - i) the roles of the participants as perceived by the participants themselves, and others not participating in the conversation.
  - ii) the function of the session as perceived by the participants based on their own expectations, and/or created by the expectations of the institutions for which they work - expectations either consciously or unconsciously expressed.
- To evaluate whether the feedback session can be counted as an example of the way in which “discourse identities and institutional roles are ... instantiated through talk” (Boden 1994:77), and to what extent the relationship between the discourse and the institution can be described as reciprocal and self-perpetuating.

The specific objectives are:

- to review the literature of institutional language in order to identify features which have been put forward as distinguishing ‘institutional talk’ from ‘normal social conversation’, or ‘everyday talk-in-interaction’;
- to describe, analyse and make generalisations about the language used in the two sets of feedback sessions;
- by means of questionnaires and interviews to investigate how the participants perceive their roles and functions;

- to assess how, and to what extent, the perceptions of the participants can be seen to shape the discourse;
- to examine whether, in recursive fashion, the discourse serves to reinforce the perception of the roles and functions so that they become further ‘institutionalised’.

In the next chapter, **Chapter 2**, there is an introduction to, and description of ‘institutional talk’, or ‘talk at work’.

This is followed, in **Chapter 3**, by a description of the methodological framework, the tools of investigation and terminology used in the study. Details are also given about the collection and selection of data.

In **Chapters 4-9** the data from the conversations is described and the research findings are given. At the beginning of each of these chapters there is a review of the literature which is concerned with institutional talk. This is followed by an analysis of, and examples from, the two sets of data.

In **Chapter 10** the argument for including the feedback session within the type of discourse described as ‘talk at work’ is examined.

This is followed, in **Chapter 11**, by an examination of discourse, role and function within the feedback session.

**Chapter 12** examines the relationship between the institution and the talk.

Finally, in **Chapter 13**, conclusions are drawn and suggestions made for further research.

## CHAPTER 2: GENRE AND INSTITUTIONAL TALK

As one of the aims of this study is to determine to what extent the feedback session can be seen as belonging to a particular category of talk it is useful to begin by attempting to say what I mean by ‘institutional talk’ or ‘talk at work’ and how these terms relate to that of genre.

### 2.1 Genre

*Genre* is defined in The Longman Dictionary of Applied Linguistics as “a particular class of speech events which are considered by the speech community as being of the same type” (Richards, Platt et al. 1985). McCarthy and Carter (1994:117) offer a similar definition: “a sequence and ordering of speech acts which together perform an activity recognised by members of the speech community”. Kress maintains that genres are specific types of text (spoken or written) that arise from conventionalised social occasions: “genres have specific forms and meanings, deriving from and encoding the functions, purposes and meanings of social occasions” (Kress 1989:19). He goes on to give some examples of genre: interview, essay, tutorial, sports commentary, novel, political speech, editorial, sermon, joke (Kress 1989:19). Kress feels that “given the relative stability of social structures, forms of text produced in and by specific social institutions, that is the resultant genres, will attain a certain degree of stability and persistence over time” (Kress 1990:4).

McCarthy and Carter (1994:35-37) make a useful distinction between genre and a prototypical generic activity such as *reporting*. They go on to say that “some genres are likely to be marked by a blending of a number of generic activities” (McCarthy and Carter 1994:37).

### 2.2 Genre within the work context

In recent years there has been an increasing interest in the idea of using the term *genre* to describe the fact that a commonality of language use, or similar types of text, can be

identified in ‘professional settings’, not only in written texts, as exemplified by Bhatia (1993), but also in oral texts.

When describing spoken texts, the concept of a characteristic discourse type or genre has often been used to describe a type of language use associated with a specific *physical* context, in particular that of the work place and the classroom (which for some of the participants is also a ‘work place’).

Earlier studies often looked at this type of ‘institutional talk’ as a means to a broader description of discourse, rather than because of a specific interest in institutional talk *per se*; for example, Sinclair and Coulthard’s studies of classroom language (Sinclair and Coulthard 1975). Coulthard and Ashby, in their study of doctor-patient interviews, admit that this specific type of conversation was chosen because it is “less complex” than other types of conversation, “the discourse structure is more obvious and repetitive” (Coulthard and Ashby 1976:70), and it is easier to collect naturally occurring data than from more spontaneous conversations. Within this article the authors rather tentatively suggest that “many information-seeking interviews will have similar structures to ... doctor-patient interviews and that the interview could well be a *discourse type*” (my italics) (Coulthard and Ashby 1976:70).

Over the past twenty years there has been increasing interest in how a number of encounters - the interview, the lesson, the seminar, the business meeting, the doctor’s consultancy, law court proceedings - while identifiable as separate genres, have a number of significant characteristics in common. Several researchers have identified such specific ‘work place-oriented’ behaviour and language, and described their findings in works with such titles as: *Social Anthropology of Work* (Wallman 1979); *Working with Language; a multidisciplinary consideration of language use in work contexts* (Coleman 1989). The majority of published works on the subject have been produced during the 1990s. Two important landmarks have been the publication of a collection of papers within the volume entitled *Talk at Work*, edited by Drew and Heritage (Drew and Heritage 1992), and the publication of *The Business of Talk* by Boden (1994).

Contexts in the workplace that have been the subject of studies include: the medical consultation (Coulthard and Ashby 1976, Bergmann 1992, Heath 1992, Maynard 1992, Heritage and Sefi 1992, ten Have 1991); the hospital clinic or ward (Sharrock and Anderson 1987, Grainger 1990); the courtroom (Pomerantz 1987, Harris 1989, Atkinson 1992, Drew 1992); the business meeting (Boden 1994); the interview (Button 1992, Gumpertz 1992); the seminar (Bashiruddin, Edge et al. 1990), and the classroom (Sinclair and Coulthard 1964, 1975, Kress 1989).

### **2.3 Institutional talk or ‘talk at work’**

Researchers and writers have attempted to find a term which describes this type of talk and which serves to distinguish it from ‘ordinary conversation’. Heritage, in one of the earlier examinations of this topic, uses the term *institutionalized activity*; he cites medical consultations, news interviews, courtroom examinations and classroom interaction as examples of occasions where “nonconversational or quasiconversational activities are accomplished” (Heritage 1984:336). In 1992 he and Drew settled on the self-explanatory term *talk at work* as the title of a collection of articles on the subject (Drew and Heritage 1992). They also refer to *institutional talk*. Boden (1994) uses the term *organizational talk*.

A number of characteristics, features and patterns have been identified as being present in ‘institutional talk’ which are not present, or not to the same degree, in ‘ordinary, social conversation’ and it is by the consistent presence of a cluster of such characteristics that researchers seek to justify ‘talk at work’ as a specific type or category, a ‘super-genre’ that includes a number of related genres. Drew and Heritage’s aim is to point to some features that “may contribute to family resemblances among cases of institutional talk” (Drew and Heritage 1992:21). Boden claims that “there are remarkably stable qualities of action across *all* organizations” (Boden 1994:77) and goes on to identify and exemplify these actions in her book *The Business of Talk*.



## 2.4 Features of institutional talk

Kress identifies some of the linguistic features that characterise a particular genre: “how ‘turn-taking’ is constructed, how sequencing is done, who has the right to ask questions, and who doesn’t, ... what sorts of linguistic forms or markers of politeness are unnecessary”, and exemplifies: “So, how I would address you in an interview is different to how I would address you in a conversation or a chat.” (Kress 1990:6).

In order to identify the specific features that differentiate an encounter such as an interview, or in the case of this study - the feedback session, from an everyday social conversation, a number of studies consider the wider social context - what is normal in the contemporary cultural setting - and then narrow the focus down to what is typical of the institution or workplace: “a concern with the structured social relations which comprise organizations and occupational practice” (Schegloff 1992:103) and the related talk.

If the feedback session is to be included within the category of ‘talk at work’ it must be demonstrated that it shares most, if not all, of the features characteristic of other occasions for talk already identified in the literature as belonging to work-related genres. One of the aims of this study is to examine to what extent the two types of feedback session can be characterised as conversations which are typical of such ‘institutional talk’. After the next chapter, *Chapter 3*, in which I outline the methodology and the framework for analysis I have selected to use in this study, there are six chapters (*Chapters 4 - 9*) in which this examination takes place. In each of these six chapters there are two parts:

- a review of the literature that has focused on encounters that can be described as ‘talk at work’, and the identification of features that are characteristic of such encounters;
- a description and analysis of the conversations that make up the data in this study, in order to determine to what extent they exhibit the characteristics identified.

Then, in *Chapter 10*, the arguments are put for and against the inclusion of the pre-service and in-service teacher training feedback sessions within the category of ‘talk at work’ or ‘institutional talk’.

## **Chapter 3 Methodology and Theoretical Framework for Analysis**

In this chapter the discussion of the methodological approach taken in this study is divided into four parts:

- 3.1 the methodological framework employed;**
- 3.2 the tools of investigation used;**
- 3.3 a description of the collection and selection of data;**
- 3.4 the terminology adopted.**

### **3.1 Methodological framework**

The methodological framework adopted in the study is that of *Conversation Analysis*. Although this approach has been used to analyse a wide range of conversation types it is especially useful in examining conversations which seem to fall within a particular genre. As the intention of this study is to identify discourse features of a specific category of talk - ‘talk at work’, and within that category, of a specific genre - the feedback session, Conversation Analysis would seem to be a suitable methodological framework to adopt.

This section (3.1) looks first at identifying the characteristics of genre, then at the problems that a study of language within a particular context poses. The advantages of using Conversation Analysis for such a study are detailed. Finally, the practical and theoretical advantages of using a Case Study approach to present the research findings are examined.

#### ***3.1.1 Identifying the characteristics of genre***

Any analysis of conversation attempts to distinguish different influences on the choice of language made by the participants. The ability to make such choices is common to all normal users of language. Levinson maintains that we can “compute out of sequences of utterances, taken together with background assumptions about language usage, highly detailed inferences about the nature of the assumptions participants are making, and the purpose for which utterances are being used. In order to participate in ordinary language

usage one must be able to make such calculations both in production and interpretation. This ability is independent of idiosyncratic beliefs, feelings and usages” (Levinson 1983:53). Brown and Levinson (1978) claim that conversation is, above all, a social activity and as such it shares the characteristics and the structure of all social activities.

Participants in conversation do not operate within a cultural vacuum, however; they operate within a particular society, and norms of society seem to influence interpretation of what is heard and the choice of language used: the participants are operating within parameters that are accepted by, and acceptable to, the society in which they live. In an analysis of conversation, therefore, we must recognise the influence of factors determined by the fact that the participants are human and so act in ways common to all normal humans, and the fact that they live within a society that has particular cultural and sociological norms.

However, the intention of this study is to search beyond these influences and to tease out features that are a direct result of the fact that the participants are operating within a narrower context - that of teacher training and development - and to explore whether a particular institution within this context can have an influence on beliefs and attitude which are, in turn, exhibited in the language used. Kress claims that genres are characterised by particular linguistic features which are in turn the product of specific social institutions: “genres have specifiable linguistic characteristics which are neither fully determined nor largely under the control of individual speakers” (Kress 1990:4). In this study I intend to test this claim. It is the identification of these specific linguistic features within the feedback session, and a description of the relationship between the language and the social context, which is the major focus of this study.

### ***3.1.2 The methodological problems***

The dilemma is, as posed as a question by Bergmann: “Is it possible to identify and describe features of the interaction which are locally produced in the sense that they are the result of the interactants’ analysis of and orientation to the context, which simultaneously is produced in and through their actions?” (Bergmann 1992:148) It is this disentangling of the local from the wider context which is the challenge for this study:

“the question is whatever observations we initially make about how such features of social organization as these work and bear on interaction, how do we translate them into defensible, empirically based analyses that help us to get access to previously unnoticed details of talk-in-interaction, and appreciate their significance?” (Schegloff 1992:106).

In one of the very first studies of ‘talk at work’, of doctor-patient interviews, Coulthard and Ashby, in 1976, claimed to provide “a linguistic tool that can be used to describe different interviews and provide objective evidence for differences or similarities which may have medical or sociological implications” (Coulthard and Ashby 1976:88). The linguistic tool they used is that of defining and describing the language in terms of the speech acts, moves, exchanges and transactions identified within the discourse. They linked these patterns to the *roles* played by the participants.

However, in a study of this nature, if links such as those claimed by Coulthard and Ashby are to be identified and justified, there are a number of questions to be answered and problems to be overcome which the methodology must resolve. In a study of conversation it must always be borne in mind that “there is a sense in which description presupposes interpretation” (Fairclough 1989:109).

Schegloff (1992:128) details two areas of concern in regard to description and interpretation.

**First area of concern:**

- “How can we show that what is so loomingly relevant for us was relevant for the parties to the interactions we are examining and thereby implicated in their production of the details of that interaction?” (Schegloff 1992: 128).

Although we can record the language used within any conversation, it can be dangerous to go on to claim that the talk is a result of particular motivations of the participants - at either a conscious or unconscious level. Stubbs warns that “a general real danger of discourse analysis is that it focuses unwarranted attention on details of interaction which had no reality for the conversationalists at the time” (Stubbs 1983:229). This is of

particular concern if the group being studied is of a different sociocultural background from that of the researcher. Pike (1964), in making the '*emic-etic*' distinction, pointed out that the '*emic*', or culturally specific framework, used for interpreting and assigning meaning to experiences by people from a common sociocultural background, can differ in various ways from the wider '*etic*' or interpretative framework of the researcher, who is an '*outsider*'.

"An emic perspective involves the study of individuals to determine how they themselves define reality and experience events" (Gall, Borg et al. 1996:608). Typically those being studied are asked such questions as "*How did you feel ...? What did you think when ...? Why did you ...?*" . On the other hand, "*etic analyses and interpretations are based on the use of frameworks, concepts, and categories from the analytic language of the social sciences and are potentially useful for comparative research across languages, settings and cultures.*" (Watson-Gegeo 1988:579). A research methodology which reconciles both the emic and etic perspective would seem to be advantageous.

#### **Second area of concern:**

- "*How can we show that what seems inescapably relevant, both to us and to the participants, about the 'context' of the interaction is demonstrably consequential for some specifiable aspect of that interaction?*" (Schegloff 1992:128)

In other words, how can we show that the participants are behaving differently within this context because of the specific nature of context. There is a danger that if the researcher expects a particular type of behaviour s/he will find it; that when a particular context is proposed it is inevitably taken as relevant and consequential for what occurs within that setting. As Schegloff warns: "invoking social structure or the setting of the talk at the outset can distract, or even blind us" (Schegloff 1992:127).

So, if the thesis is that the '*work*' or institutional context has an effect on behaviour, how can we be sure that the participants are aware of it and that it is important to them? Certain settings, for example law courts, characterise a setting or context very clearly -

both to the participants and society at large (Atkinson 1992). Others, such as in this study, are not so clear cut. This study aims to provide evidence of the relevance of the context to the participants. There is a need to demonstrate that the fact that the talk is taking place within a particular setting has consequences for the shape, form, content or character of the interaction. In order to do this two main approaches are utilised:

- a detailed description and analysis of conversations between participants within a specified context: interpretation based on patterns identified across a number of conversations within the study and in comparable studies conducted by other researchers in the field, and an in-depth analysis of selected conversations (an **etic** interpretation);
- a description and analysis of information gleaned from
  - questionnaires filled in by the participants
  - interviews conducted with participants.

In this way I hope to tap into the interpretation of events as given by the participants (an **emic** interpretation).

These two sources of data have been labelled *watching* and *asking* by Erickson (1981). Cohen and Manion, in their description of triangulation (the use of two or more methods of data collection) note the advantages claimed for a methodology that takes more than one approach: “triangular techniques in social science attempt to map out, or explain more fully, the richness and complexity of human behaviour” (Cohen and Manion 1994:233). Van Lier advocates the process of triangulation: the inspection of different kinds of data, the use of different methods, and/or a variety of research tools can be used to achieve a richer description (van Lier 1988:13). One way to achieve triangulation involves the use of more than one perspective in the analysis of the same set of data, as is proposed for this study. As Stubbs points out: “it is a matter of everyday commonsense ... that accounts of an event should be cross-checked against other independent accounts, or evidence gathered by a variety of methods” (Stubbs 1983:234).

### ***3.1.3 Conversation Analysis and related approaches***

The main approach adopted to describe and analyse the interaction within the feedback sessions in this study (the etic interpretation) is that recommended by Schegloff (1992) - that of Conversation Analysis. Schegloff feels that it is the methodological approach of Conversation Analysis which can best address the two areas of concern which he poses above (pages 25 and 26).

Studies of people and the language they use have been made by researchers in the various fields of philosophy, anthropology, sociology and linguistics. Before justifying my choice of approach by describing in detail the advantages of Conversation Analysis as a methodological framework for this study, it is useful to note, and attempt to define, some of the terms most commonly employed by writers and researchers engaged in the study of language and society to describe their activity.

Similar surveys have been conducted by writers anxious to situate their focus of study and methodological approach within the context of similar disciplines; for example, Stubbs (1983), van Dijk (1985), Button and Lee (1987), Fairclough (1989, 1995), McCarthy (1991), Duranti and Goodwin (1992), and Drew and Heritage (1992). These different approaches can be seen to range along a continuum: from analyses of communication based on linguistic description, in which sociological aspects are barely mentioned, to those which focus almost exclusively on sociocultural relationships, with attention to communication between subjects as just one of the many factors considered. It is important to understand that these approaches overlap; the differences to a certain extent can be ascribed to a choice of emphasis or focus.

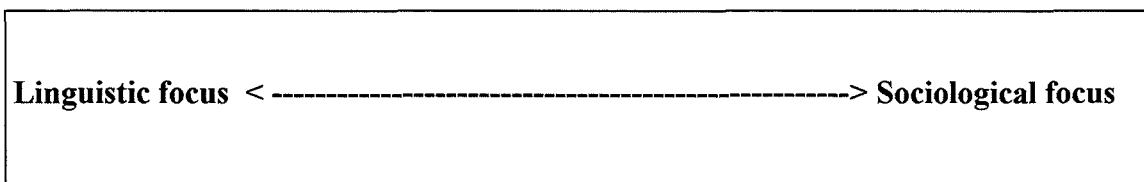


Figure 1.

At one end of the spectrum is **Speech act theory**. This approach is very much concerned with linguistic form, related meaning and social action. The linguistic



philosopher Austin (1962) first put forward the view that in producing an utterance a speaker performs an action, and Searle (1965, 1969) went on to develop certain aspects of Austin's analysis into speech-act theory. Grice (1975) also espoused the view of language as social action; his formulation of *conversational maxims* made an influential contribution.

The approach adopted by those at the 'linguistic' end of the spectrum is based on identifying certain speech acts as performing particular functions, by examining the illocutionary and perlocutionary force of the utterance, and the speaker's use of implicature. The approach recognises the importance of sequence in interaction but, according to conversation analysts Drew and Heritage (1992), it does not pay enough attention to contextual, sociocultural considerations. Stubbs notes that 'linguists' take little or no account of the participants' view and have even "tended to dismiss users' accounts of their own behaviour or attitudes as haphazard, unreliable and naive". (Stubbs 1983:235). Labov and Fanshel also warned against a reliance on speech act theory, pointing out that it is not able to handle the more abstract types of social interaction such as "challenges, defenses, and retreats, which have to do with the status of the participants, their rights and obligations, and their changing relationships in terms of social organization" (Labov and Fanshel 1977:58).

Tsui, however, defends the position she takes in her work *English Conversation* (Tsui 1994). She feels that some discourse/conversation analysts have leaned too far in the direction of sociological concerns: "The studies of conversational data (by Conversation Analysts) have focused largely on how conversation is socially organised and managed by participants" (Tsui 1994:3). She puts herself in a distinctly different camp from that of Conversation Analysts and advocates a greater emphasis on the linguistic aspects of conversation: an approach that involves the study of the use of language in communication and the relations between certain linguistic features and the contexts of situation. Although speech act theory does not, in itself, provide an adequate methodology for this study, the taxonomy of 'discourse acts' provided by Tsui (1994) will prove to be very useful in the analysis of my research data - see *Section 3.4 Terminology*.

At the other end of the spectrum from the speech act theorists are those espousing an ethnographic approach to sociolinguistic research. **Ethnographic** studies have emphasised the role of the sociocultural context. “Ethnography is the study of people’s behaviour in naturally occurring ongoing settings, with a focus on the cultural interpretation of behaviour” (Watson-Gegeo 1988:576). According to Gall et al (1996:608) “culture is the central concept in ethnographic research”. Clearly integral to human culture is the way in which communication is effected through language.

The characteristics of ethnography which are of advantage to this study include the following:

- the approach is ‘holistic’ in that “any aspect of a culture or a behaviour has to be described and explained in relation to the whole system of which it is a part” (Watson-Gegeo 1988:577);
- it is comparative: “the ethnographer first seeks to build a theory of the setting under study, then to extrapolate or generalize from that setting or situation to others studied in a similar way” (Watson-Gegeo 1988:581).

In her review of Ethnography in ESL, Watson-Gregeo is anxious to point out that “true ethnographic work is systematic, detailed, and rigorous, rather than anecdotal or impressionistic” (Watson-Gegeo 1988:588). However, in the opinion of Drew and Heritage (1992), ethnographers have not developed analyses which focus in sufficient detail on the organisation of specific *sequences* of language.

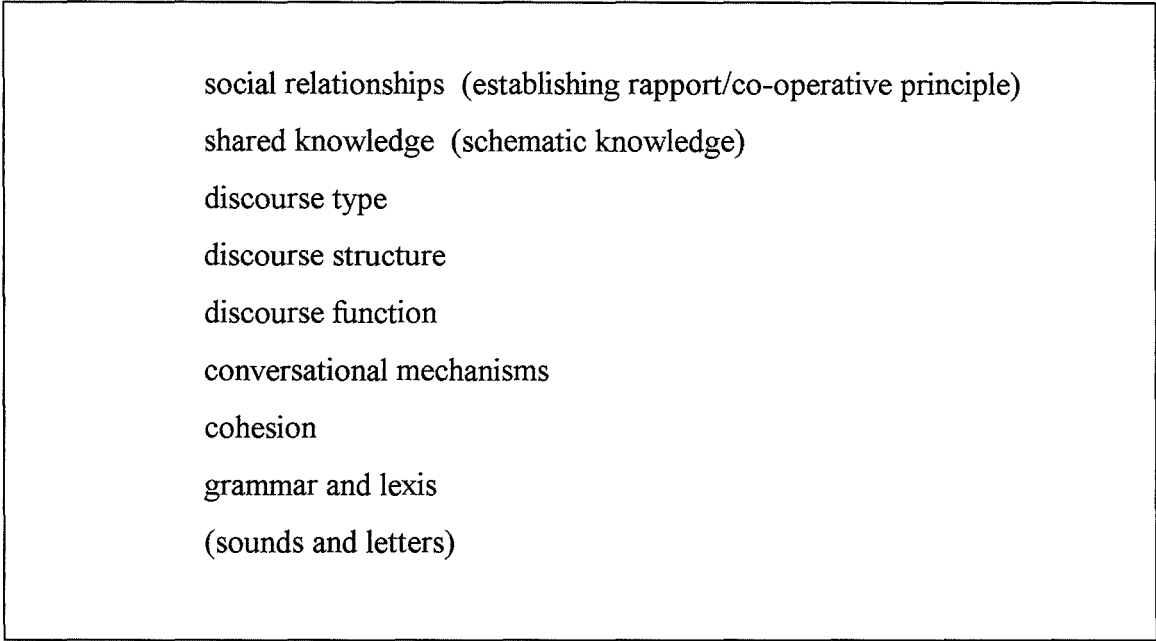
The term **Ethnomethodology** originates with Garfinkel (1971) and has been described as “the study of techniques that individuals use to make sense of everyday social environments, and the common strategies they use in these environments to accomplish the tasks of communicating, making decisions and reasoning” (Gall, Borg et al. 1996:626). From ethnomethodology, with such American researchers as Sacks, Jefferson and Schegloff, arose the new approach of Conversation Analysis. While remaining strongly influenced by sociology, Conversation Analysts focus more overtly on language forms, and particularly on patterns and sequences which occur over a wide

range of natural data. These regularities are identified through close observation of numerous conversations.

An approach which is very close to and, in the opinion of some, indistinguishable from Conversation Analysis is **Discourse Analysis**. McCarthy notes that “what is often called *conversation analysis* within the American tradition can also be included under the general heading of discourse analysis” (McCarthy 1991:6).

As Stubbs admits in the opening line of his book, *Discourse Analysis*: “The term discourse analysis is very ambiguous” (Stubbs 1983:1). Discourse Analysis is clearly a product of interdisciplinary concerns. Van Dijk in his introduction to *Discourse Analysis as a New Cross-Discipline* (van Dijk 1985:1-12) lists six main individual disciplines which have influenced the development of discourse analysis: sociolinguistics, speech act theory, text grammars, psychology and artificial intelligence, sociology and anthropology. McCarthy (1991:7), while noting that discourse analysis “has grown into a wide-ranging and heterogeneous discipline” feels that there is general agreement among discourse analysts that they are concerned with “the description of language above the sentence level”, and are interested in “the contexts and cultural influences which affect language in use” (McCarthy 1991:7)

Cook (1989:80) in the course of an inquiry into discourse presents the following list of primary features of the discourse process. The features are hierarchically arranged in order to demonstrate the difference between what he refers to as a ‘top-down’ and a ‘bottom-up’ perspective on discourse processing. It can be argued that the ‘top-down’ or ‘holistic’ approach, in which the focus narrows from the wider, social context to the detail of language, is that adopted by those at the sociological end of the methodological range. On the other hand, the bottom-up, or ‘atomistic’ approach, is favoured by those at the more linguistic end of the spectrum who examine how the ‘building blocks’ of discourse combine to make a cohesive and coherent whole.



social relationships (establishing rapport/co-operative principle)  
shared knowledge (schematic knowledge)  
discourse type  
discourse structure  
discourse function  
conversational mechanisms  
cohesion  
grammar and lexis  
(sounds and letters)

Figure 2. From Figure 8 in *Discourse* (Cook 1989:80)

Those with linguistic orientation typically put emphasis on discourse as the expansion of language beyond the unit of the sentence. Their main concern is to examine the rules or procedures whereby a collection of juxtaposed utterances acquires internal coherence as a spoken or written text. Stubbs gives a definition of discourse analysis as an attempt “to study the organization of language above the sentence or above the clause” (Stubbs 1983:1). Within this tradition belong the studies of van Dijk (1985), and the studies of a group at the University of Birmingham. The Birmingham group’s model was arguably the first systematic attempt to provide a descriptive framework of Discourse Analysis. Their model, while based on speech act theory, puts more emphasis on the function of speech acts within the whole discourse, as exemplified in their studies of classroom and medical interaction (Sinclair and Coulthard 1975, Coulthard and Ashby 1976, Coulthard 1985, Coulthard and Montgomery 1981).

By contrast other discourse analysts focus not so much on the detailed linguistic units of the sentence but on the whole conversation in order to derive principles, based on sociological explanations, which govern conversational procedures and management. Stubbs continues his definition by describing Discourse Analysis as being “concerned

with language in use in social contexts” (Stubbs 1983:1). He feels that it is this emphasis on context (in addition to co-text) which has distinguished discourse analysis.

The exact nature of discourse analysis, therefore, depends very much on individual researchers, and has been the subject of fierce argument. Between some who call themselves *discourse analysts*, there are clearly ideological, in addition to methodological differences, as witnessed by a series of critiques by Widdowson (1995a, 1995b) and Fairclough (1996) on each other’s approach. Widdowson sums up the different points of view by claiming that “one tradition of discourse analysis has made statements about social attitudes and beliefs, the exercise of power, the influence of ideology, and so on, with scant reference to the linguistic data; and another tradition has made statements about the specifics of language in use without paying much attention to social factors.” (Widdowson 1995:159). He goes on to say that it should be possible to reconcile the two traditions.

Discourse analysis of *spoken* language is often treated as being synonymous with Conversation Analysis. Some, however, insist on a distinction. Levinson (1983:286) in his survey of the study of conversation identifies “two major approaches to the analysis of conversation”: Discourse Analysis and Conversation Analysis. He claims that Discourse Analysis originates in linguistics whereas Conversation Analysis originates in sociology. While Discourse Analysis tends to prefer analysing single texts in depth, Conversation Analysis examines ‘as many instances as possible of some particular phenomenon across texts’ (Levinson 1983:287), identifying “recurring patterns across many records of naturally occurring conversations” (Levinson 1983:287). Sharrock and Anderson are also anxious to point out the differences between the approach taken by Discourse Analysts and that taken by Conversation Analysts (Sharrock and Anderson 1987). McCarthy makes a comparison between the British and the American approach to account for the differences in focus: “The British work has principally followed structural-linguistic criteria, on the basis of the isolation of units, and sets of rules defining well-formed sequences of discourse. American ethnomethodology has been dominated by work within the ethnomethodological tradition, which emphasises the

research method of close observation of groups of people communicating in natural settings” (McCarthy 1991:6).

**Conversation Analysis** seems to be a methodology particularly suited to achieve the aims of this study if we feel with Schegloff that it “is at a point where linguistics and sociology .. meet” (Schegloff 1992:104); it lies within the middle sector of the ‘linguistics - sociology’ spectrum, see Figure 1, page 28. Goodwin and Duranti sum up the advantages of the approach: “conversation analysis provides a thoroughgoing analysis of language as a mode of interaction which relies upon context for the interpretation of action that at the very same time shapes, expands and changes that context” (Goodwin and Duranti 1992:30).

As noted above (page 30), the Conversation Analysis approach was developed by ethnomethodologists: Sack’s early studies of natural conversation derive from an ethnomethodological perspective. He was interested in discovering how a conversation’s “structure and resources reflect speakers’ social knowledge” (Sacks 1972:325) and advocated the use of “our knowledge of social structure” (Sacks 1972:327) to interpret everyday discourse. The first ‘Conversation Analysts’, such as Sacks, Jefferson and Schegloff, combined an ethnomethodological perspective with a study of the detail of language organisation and patterns, to develop the procedures that are at the heart of Conversation Analysis.

Conversation Analysis is defined by Gall et al (1996:629) as “the study of the rules of speech acts between two or more people”. Others claim that Conversation Analysis is much more concerned with the sociological aspects of communication than this definition would suggest. Drew and Heritage, for example, state that it combines “a concern with the contextual sensitivity of language use with a focus on talk as a vehicle for social action” (Drew and Heritage 1992:16). It recognises the “complex interplay between knowledge, interaction patterns, social relations and power which constitute an important intersection between studies of language and of social relations” (Drew and Heritage 1992:52). Button and Lee are anxious to point out that “C.A. is concerned to study *the social organisation of natural language-in-use*” (Button and Lee 1987:2). The

intention of this study is to focus both on the language and social factors within a particular context. The use of Conversation Analysis as a methodology would, therefore, seem appropriate. However, critics of Conversation Analysis point out that, although the approach focuses on the way conversation is structured according to the orientation of the participants to particular social structures, there has been a reluctance to take the analysis further: “conversation analysis has been resistant to making connections between such ‘micro’ structures of conversation and the ‘macro’ structures of social institutions and societies” (Fairclough 1989:12). It is for this reason that in this study Conversation Analysis is supplemented by further means of investigation in order to gain a more complete picture, not only of the discourse, but also of the motivations of the participants, and of the influencing social factors (see *Sections 3.2.2 and 3.5* for details concerning the use of questionnaires and interviews). In this way I hope to take account of Fairclough’s criticism that Conversation Analysis “answers ‘what?’ questions but not ‘how?’ and ‘why?’ questions” (Fairclough 1989:12)

Protagonists of Conversation Analysis have borrowed much from speech act theory. They think of “an utterance as an action .. an interactive product of what was projected by a previous turn or turns at talk and what the speaker actually does....This analytical integration of what linguists would term the ‘illocutionary’ dimension of a current utterance with the ‘perlocutionary’ dimension of its prior has been a hallmark of CA data analysis” (Drew and Heritage 1992:18). As Harris notes: “one of the central problems in the analysis of discourse has been the attempt to formalize the relationship between the linguistic form of an utterance and its function in context” (Harris 1989:149). It is this detailed focus on the function of utterances and the way they are understood and acted upon that is necessary in this study in order to investigate the relationship between language, function and the role of the participants in the interactions under scrutiny. The central premise of Conversation Analysis is that the context in which the talk takes place, and especially the preconceptions and expectations of the protagonists, determines the nature of the talk that takes place. It is also felt that the talk itself serves to validate and reinforce the context - so that this type of talk is more likely in similar, future situations. Maynard and Wilson (1980) identified and illustrated the possibility of using the techniques of Conversation Analysis to elucidate empirically the mechanisms of social

structure as an essential context on which participants rely, in the turn-by-turn development of their interaction, and the way it is, at the same time, the product of the same interaction. In other words the participants are playing a role as they see it should be played and by so doing perpetuate these expectations and procedures. As one of the aims of this study is to investigate to what extent perceived roles and talk within the specific context of the feedback session are mutually reinforcing this methodology would seem the most useful approach to take.

Conversation Analysis, by means of rigorous and detailed observation, transcription, and analysis of language can be used as a basis for theorising because “from close looking at the world we can find things that we could not, by imagination, assert were there. We would not know that they were ‘typical’” (Sacks 1984:25). There is a need to adopt a methodology that focuses on units large enough to encompass series of utterances, the sequences of activity as well as the component unit turn if it is accepted that ‘conversational location’, both in terms of ‘local turn-by-turn organization’ (Sacks, Schegloff et al. 1974) and in terms of overall ‘conversational structure’ (Schegloff and Sacks 1973) is crucial in determining how an utterance is understood. Levinson (1983) points out the importance of ‘sequences of utterances’ in assisting understanding and inference. It is for this reason that a methodology is needed that allows study of the feedback session in its entirety in order to get as complete a picture as possible. Fairclough (1989:10) notes that one of the strengths of Conversation Analysis is that it works with extended samples of real conversation.

Stubbs in his promotion of the term ‘discourse analysis’ in preference to Conversation Analysis claims: “The term conversational analysis is too narrow as it appears to cut out the study of more formal spoken language” (Stubbs 1983:10). However, Conversation Analysis is not exclusively used to study ‘ordinary conversations’ and a number of conversation analysts have been pursuing an important distinction between every day talk-in-action and institutional talk which occurs in professional settings. Drew and Heritage claim that Conversation Analysis “may yield special insights into how persons conduct their affairs in institutional contexts” (Drew and Heritage 1992:5) and there have been a number of studies of ‘talk at work’ in the 1990s using Conversation Analysis



as the major methodological tool: for example, Boden and Zimmerman (1991); Drew and Heritage (1992). Over twenty years ago Coulthard and Ashby, in their studies of doctor-patient interviews, deliberately decided to study “situations in which institutional definitions constrain the purposes and goals of the interaction and the roles of the participants” (Coulthard and Ashby 1976). They started with the expectation that the discourse structure in the institutional setting would be “more obvious and repetitive”, lacking the “variation and complexity” of non-institutional, or social, conversations. Later studies, however, have concentrated on institutional talk, not so much because they are an ‘easier’ type of conversation to study, but because of the interest in the characteristics of such talk as specific genre. A number of these studies are collected together in *Talk and Work* (Drew and Heritage 1992) and, in her work *The Business of Talk*, Boden proclaims “a new and rather insistent emphasis on the need to study organizations *as they happen*” (Boden 1994:26). As one of the aims of this study is to demonstrate that the feedback session can be described as a ‘work’ context, and the resultant talk can be described as belonging to a body of ‘institutional talk’, then it would seem useful to employ the methodology of those researchers who have studied similar types of ‘talk at work’.

An extension or adaptation of the methodology of Conversation Analysis, which has been employed by many of the researchers previously cited, and which goes beyond that of a restricted analysis of individual conversations, is that of **comparative analysis**. The use of comparative analysis, owes much to the influence of the ethnographic approach on Conversation Analysis. One way to focus on what makes a setting special: to investigate the identifying characteristics of the activities associated with a particular institutional setting - in this case the feedback session - is by comparison with ‘normal’ conversations. “The study of ordinary conversation, preferably casual conversation between peers, may .. offer a principled approach to determining what is distinctive about interactions involving, for example, the specialisms of the school or the hospital” (Drew and Heritage 1992:19), and the roles played within the institutional settings. For example, in ten Have’s study of doctor-patient conversations, “asymmetries are compared with a model of symmetrical interaction assumed for informal conversation among peers” (ten Have 1991:139). It contrasts the action repertoire of doctors and patients with the patterns of

ordinary conversation; even though they change from one occasion to another and from one moment to another, patterns can be identified. It will be useful to see whether distinctive patterns can be identified in the feedback session and so a comparative approach will be taken when describing discourse within the sessions. It will also be useful to compare and contrast the analyses of the two types of feedback session - pre-service and in-service - to establish common features in both types of session, and to distinguish any notable differences.

#### ***3.1.4 The Case Study***

Once a decision is made about how to describe and analyse the data gathered from the feedback sessions, it needs to be decided:

- a) how much of the data collected needs to be analysed in order to make valid generalisations;
- b) how this data can best be presented, in order to put forward a convincing case for any generalisations made and conclusions reached.

#### **Advantages of the case study approach**

The case study approach has particular benefits, both in terms of analysis and presentation. In their review of methods of research Gall et al offer the following as a definition of case study research: “the in-depth study of instances of a phenomenon in its natural context and from the perspective of the participants involved in the phenomenon” (Gall, Borg et al. 1996:545). Because the case study entails “the intensive study of specific instances” (Gall, Borg et al. 1996:543) it can be claimed to be particularly appropriate for use with Discourse or Conversation Analysis where the entire conversation needs to be analysed in order to identify sequences and patterns of organisation that would not be evident from extracts. By using a case study approach an entire conversation can be described and analysed in detail; time and space would preclude such a detailed treatment of multiple conversations.

The case study approach also allows time for conducting an in-depth investigation of the reactions, opinions and feelings of the participants, by means, for example, of individual interviews. It therefore allows for a dual etic and emic approach.

Yin also notes that the case study is a strategy which has a distinct advantage when “a *how* or *why* question is being asked about a contemporary set of events over which the investigator has little or no control” (Yin 1994:9). The conversations analysed by Conversation Analysts are authentic in terms of time and place. They are not ‘experiments’ that can be repeated under controlled laboratory conditions. For this reason it is not usually practically possible to get numerous suitable conversations from which statistically significant data can be derived.

In sum, the case study approach is useful for use with Conversation Analysis in that it enables focused attention on the details of language in entire conversations. It allows the researcher to present his or her observations alongside full transcripts of the conversations being studied. At the same time, the case study allows for a means of investigating the point of view of the participants, so that a more ethnographic perspective can be brought to bear.

### **Disadvantages of the case study approach**

However, a number of criticisms have been levelled against the case study, notably that they lack rigour and provide little basis for scientific generalisation. It can be argued that the researcher needs to study multiple cases in order to test whether themes and patterns identified in one case study are typical. These are criticisms which are difficult to counter; although Yin (1994:10) claims that “case studies, like experiments, are generalizable to theoretical propositions and not to populations and universes”.

As Stubbs points out “different amounts of data ... are needed for different purposes.” (Stubbs 1983:223). This study has a number of aims. It therefore makes sense to decide the amount of data to be analysed and presented, and the method used to do so, as befits the particular purpose. For this reason, in *Chapters 4 - 9*, in which the data is analysed, a case study approach is used where it is appropriate: in order to focus on the organisation and detail of language within entire conversations. However, in order to meet all the aims of the study, and to show that the case studies chosen are typical of the data as a whole, their use is combined with other methods of data analysis and presentation. See

*Section 3.5 Summary of Chapter 3: Methodology and framework for analysis, for details.*

### **3.2 Tools of Investigation: a review**

Clearly the tools of research chosen should be compatible with the methodological approach or approaches adopted. Researchers in the field of Conversation Analysis advocate obtaining data for analysis from recordings of naturally occurring conversations. However, other techniques may be successfully employed to supplement and complement this tool.

The usefulness to the study of the following is now discussed:

- observation, recording and transcribing
- questionnaires
- interviews

#### ***3.2.1 Observation, recording and transcribing***

Observing and recording conversation, which is later transcribed and analysed, is the major research tool of Conversation Analysis. Observation and interpretation of behaviour by the researcher is compatible with an etic perspective.

As Gall et al point out: observational methods may yield more accurate data than self-report data. “For example, educators have noted that teachers dominate classroom talk at the expense of student participation. But what are the actual percentages of teacher and student talk in classrooms? Self-reports by teachers or students are unlikely to yield an accurate answer to this question, but an analysis of observations recorded on audiotape or videotape could do so” (Gall, Borg et al. 1996:328).

The main difficulty of recording is that in a situation where there are a number of people interacting at the same time, the conversations and paralinguistic features of all participants are difficult to record and later analyse. The fewer the participants the more accurate and complete is the data-collection.

In an attempt to record typical behaviour the observation should be in as natural circumstances as possible: in the place where, and at the time when, the conversation would normally take place - not in a laboratory, recording studio or other artificial setting. In this way, though natural behaviour is not guaranteed, the likelihood of untypical behaviour is reduced.

Recording can be by means of note-taking by an observer, and/or by means of audio or video equipment. Video is generally considered to be preferable as it is less obtrusive than a human observer, and it takes into account the paralinguistic features of gestures, body movement, eye-contact and facial expression which an audio recording alone cannot do. A video recording can also be played back repeatedly so that the conversation can be transcribed as accurately as possible, including a note of any pertinent paralinguistic features.

The disadvantage of any type of recording is that it might inhibit or alter the behaviour of those being studied. Stubbs (1983) outlines the biases in recording. He claims that "in extreme cases, observation itself may generate artificial behaviour. And, although the effects may be controlled, it is never possible to guarantee that there are no effects." (Stubbs 1983:227). However, many researchers who have had experience of this method agree with Coulthard and Ashby who claim that "the kind of linguistic adjustments are, for our purposes, trivial ... the kind of patterning we are interested in is too basic and deep-seated to be altered" (Coulthard and Ashby 1976:73). Also, many of those being observed report that, after the first few minutes, they forgot about the presence of the camera.

Once recorded the conversations can then be transcribed and analysed. In Stubb's opinion "A close transcription of a conversation can reveal, even to the unbeliever, ways in which the perceived order of the social world is but an elaborate illusion, constructed by interpretation. ... a close transcription can reveal types of very detailed conversational order at levels at which conversationalists would never suspect any" (Stubbs 1983:228).

However, in describing interaction through transcription there are theoretical and practical problems to overcome. A conversation is made up of a series of graded rather than discrete behaviours, many of which are taking place simultaneously. Any system for designating codes or signs to such behaviours must be subjective in nature: decisions have to be made as to what to describe on paper for purposes of analysis, and how such a description can be realised. As Stubbs points out: “There is no single correct transcription for a given utterance. A broad transcription and different narrow transcriptions can select different features for representation” (Stubbs 1983:229). He goes on to say that such decisions “take for granted interpretations and analyses of the data” (Stubbs 1983:229). As noted by Green, Franquiz et al. (1997:172), the transcription “‘re’-presents” data constructed by the researcher for a purpose. It is not just talk written down.

Roberts (1997:168) notes “the tension between accuracy, readability and representation”, and Cook (1990) outlines the dilemma faced by researchers when deciding what degree of detail to describe when analysing recorded conversation. The following questions have to be considered.

- Is it necessary, or possible, to transcribe all the words spoken, by all participants, from the start to the finish of a complete conversation?
- Should the words be transcribed using standard orthography, by means of a system which approximates to the way the words are spoken; for example, *gonna* for *going to* and taking account of dialect, or by phonemic or phonetic transcription?
- Should standard punctuation be used, or a more detailed transcription that, for example, indicates the time of pauses in speech?
- Should sounds such as *Uhuh* and *Mmm* be included, and a note made of hesitations, ‘false starts’, or repeated sounds or words, for example: *Erm I I don don’t think I agree?*
- Is it useful to indicate overlaps, when more than one person is speaking at the same time, and to note as precisely as possible the timing of each participant’s utterance in relation to those of others?
- Should paralinguistic features be described: posture; distance of participants from one another; eye contact; gestures such as nods, smiles, grimaces; ‘involuntary’ movement

such as face-touching, hand-wringing, eyebrow movement; tone and intonation of voice?

- Should information be included about the situation in which the conversation takes place: the type of room, the furniture arrangement; the lighting?
- Is it useful to include information about any conversations the participants may have had previous to the one under scrutiny; information about participant knowledge of the topics under discussion; even an assessment of the participants' knowledge of the world?
- Does the study require a description of the relationship between the participants, the relative power, an indication of the attitude one may have to the other?

The answers to these questions very much depend on the **purpose** to which the transcription is to be put and, from a practical point of view, to what extent it is physically possible, using the chosen method of observation, to encode the information. Studies have utilised a range of transcribing techniques. An example from one end of the spectrum would be the noting, in real time, of the words spoken by just one pupil in a class. Examples of transcriptions from the other end of the spectrum are to be found in Birdwhistell (1973), in which the words used are recorded in standard orthography, alongside which a very detailed note is made of paralinguistic features such as 'pinched nostrils', 'right sneer' and 'slow lick - lips'.

Birdwhistell's choice of transcription fitted the focus of the study - that of kinesics. Yule (1995), on the other hand, used a transcription which did not include facial gestures but which encoded intonation, alongside the words uttered, as this best demonstrated the thesis of his study. This is because he feels, as stated in an earlier publication, that "the speaker has available to him the full range of 'voice quality' effects (as well as facial expression, postural and gestural systems). Armed with these he can always override the effect of the words he speaks" (Brown and Yule 1983:4).

Details of the observation, recording methods, and transcription codes I selected, and reasons for their use in this study, are given in *Sections 3.3.1 and 3.3.2*, below.

### 3.2.2 *Questionnaires and Interviews*

Both questionnaires and interviews “typically enquire about the feelings, motivations, attitudes, accomplishments and experiences of individuals” (Gall, Borg et al. 1996:288). They can be used to gain insight into the participants’ interpretation of actions and events, and are compatible with the emic perspective. Yin (1994) recommends both questionnaires and interviews as useful tools in case study research. They are “used extensively in research to collect information that is not directly observable” (Gall, Borg et al. 1996:288). For this reason information obtained from questionnaires and interviews can complement research findings gleaned from observation: the view offered by the participants can serve to reinforce or question assumptions made from Conversation Analysis.

**Questionnaires** ask the same questions of all the individuals in the sample and the respondents reply in writing. A number of writers on research methodology note the advantages and disadvantages of this tool, for example: Hopkins (1993:136), Cohen and Manion (1994:92-94). They can be an efficient way of collecting data, particularly in terms of the researcher’s time. Questionnaires are more impersonal in that the person responding is not meeting the questioner face-to-face. This may encourage confidences that would not be afforded in person. However, the respondents have a degree of control over the data-collecting process: they have choice about the extent to which they complete the answers. In addition, the researcher cannot probe more deeply into the respondents’ opinions and feelings by using follow-up questions. Once the questionnaire has been distributed, it is not usually possible to modify the items, even if they prove not be clear to some respondents, or if they do not elicit responses which are useful or illuminating. As there is no opportunity for the researcher to clarify points of misunderstanding the questions have to be carefully worded to avoid misinterpretations and ambiguity. Often a pilot study will prove to be useful in order to modify the questionnaire before the main data-collecting process. Details of the questionnaires I used in this study, and reasons for their use, are given in *Section 3.3.3*, below.

An **interview** consists of oral questions from the researcher, and oral responses from the person being interviewed. The responses are then recorded or noted. As with



questionnaires interviews have advantages and disadvantages as noted by Hopkins (1993:126-7), and Cohen and Manion (1994:271-297). In an interview the researcher is more in control of the degree to which questions are answered than in a questionnaire. The process is more adaptable; skilled interviewers can follow up a respondent's answers to obtain more information and clarify vague statements. Structured or guided interviews can be useful in that the more free-wheeling discussion can lead to interesting details missed in a written questionnaire. Interviewers can also build trust and rapport, making it sometimes possible to elicit information that the respondent may not give by any other data-collection method. In a study comparing information obtained by interview and questionnaire, Jackson and Rothey (1961) found that the interview yielded more complete information concerning negative aspects of the self.

However, there are disadvantages associated with the interview. The information gained is more difficult to compare across participants - especially for statistical analysis. It is difficult to standardise the interview situation so that the interviewer does not influence the respondent to answer questions in a certain way, though it can be an advantage to be able to explore more open-ended topics. The interviewees cannot remain anonymous and the degree and type of response can vary depending on the rapport the interviewer has with the individual respondent. For these reasons the interview is more commonly used in qualitative research. Details of the interviews I used in this study, and the reasons for their use, are given in *Section 3.3.3*, below.

In this study the major tool of research used is the video-recording and analysis of conversations. In addition, all the participants either filled in a questionnaire or took part in a structured interview in which their views were solicited about various aspects of the feedback session and the people taking part. These are now described in more detail, in *Section 3.3*.

### **3.3 Collection and selection of data**

In this section there is a description of :

- 3.3.1 the conditions under which the video recordings were made;
- 3.3.2 the transcription script used in the analysis of the conversations;
- 3.3.3 the questionnaires and interviews used with the participants, after the feedback sessions.

#### ***3.3.1 Video Recording***

The major tool of investigation I utilised in this study is that of the video recording. This method of recording data was chosen for the following reasons.

- It is a familiar piece of equipment to the participants in this study and not so inhibiting and obtrusive as a human recorder might be.
- With certain provisos, outlined in the discussion on transcription (*Section 3.3.2* below), the camera is a more ‘objective’ recorder than the human observer who, because of time restraints, has to be selective about what to record.
- As the conversations are on tape they could be reviewed time and time again until I had as detailed a transcription as deemed necessary for an in-depth analysis. In this study the conversations were at least 20 minutes long and took many hours to transcribe.
- A visual, in addition to an audio recording, allowed me to ‘hear’ better what is being said. In this study this was an important factor as it is the detail of the language used which is of interest; it was crucial to get as complete a record of what was said as possible.
- A visual recording can give useful data about paralinguistic features which can aid interpretation. Facial expressions often give vital information as to how, for example, silence is to be interpreted. As silence as response was a predicted feature of the discourse the ability to obtain evidence afforded by paralinguistic features was of paramount importance.

The data for this study was collected from the two types of feedback session described in the introduction: pre-service and in-service. (See also Appendices 3 and 4.)

a) Pre-service

Eight trainers (three men and five women) and thirty two trainees (twenty women and twelve men) were recorded on video during four-week CTEFLA teacher training courses which took place between August 1992 and March 1993, in eight periods of between 35-50 minutes. Within each of the eight periods two feedback sessions took place. Therefore, in total, 16 feedback sessions were recorded, each on average 20 minutes long. (See Appendix 3 for details of the participants.)

b) In-service

Six Directors of Studies (two men and four women) and nine teachers (three men and six women) were recorded between March and August 1995. Nine separate feedback sessions were recorded, each on average 25 minutes long. (See Appendix 4 for details of the participants.)

Altogether about ten hours of conversation were recorded and analysed.

The feedback sessions were recorded with the knowledge and permission of all those taking part. The recordings were taken by a fixed, unmanned camera so that no people other than the participants were in the room. The camera frame was such that all participants were in view throughout the recording. I was not present during any of the sessions. When I later asked them how they felt about being videotaped, the participants reported that, while feeling self-conscious for the first few minutes of the recording, they quickly got used to the unusual situation, and they did not feel that their behaviour was untypical because of the presence of the camera. Even when the participants showed signs of being self-conscious at the start, I agree with the assertion made by Coulthard and Ashby that “the kind of linguistic adjustments are, for our purposes, trivial” (Coulthard and Ashby 1976:73).

The pre-service sessions were chosen in co-operation with the trainers. Some trainers who were approached chose not to be recorded on days when they thought the extra attention would not be welcome: when trainees they thought were in a vulnerable state were teaching. For this reason the data from the pre-service sessions is probably biased towards a study of more confident and competent trainees. Similar reservations were not voiced by the Directors of Studies, therefore I believe it is safe to assume that the teachers were chosen at random to suit the convenience of the DOSs when arranging for the recordings to be made.

My role and status *vis-à-vis* the participants is as follows. At the time of the study I was a colleague of the trainers in the pre-service sessions, and of the DOSs and the teachers in the in-service sessions, in that we all worked for the same organisation. I was better acquainted with the trainers who were permanent colleagues than the DOSs and teachers, who were working temporarily for the organisation. I was not acquainted with the trainees before the study. They were at the school only for the four-week duration of the course and I introduced myself simply as someone who worked at the school.

Details about the aims of the study were not given to any of the participants either before or immediately after the session under study. They did not know that their language was to be examined, nor were they aware of any of the details of the analysis to be conducted. I told them only that I was studying “*what happens in feedback sessions*”. I felt that the less the participants knew about the detailed purpose of the study the less likely they were to be self-conscious, or act uncharacteristically. However, it has to be acknowledged that the assessors, in particular, must have felt themselves to be under scrutiny from someone they knew as a fellow teacher trainer. I feel sure that they made an effort to conduct the session in as ‘professional’ a way as possible. On the other hand, I do not feel that those being assessed were put under any additional strain as the natural assumption would be that it was the behaviour of the assessor rather than that of the person being assessed that was being evaluated.

I promised all the participants, verbally and in writing, that the recordings would not be viewed by anyone but me without their permission, and that although I might use their

words in future publications they would not be named. The names I use for the participants in the transcripts (see Appendix 1 and Appendix 2) and in the analyses (see Appendix 3 and Appendix 4) are not the real names of the participants.

After the analysis had been completed I contacted the participants, explained the aims and outcome of the research and invited them to read the draft of the research findings. I reminded them that no-one would be identified by name and asked their permission for use of the data gleaned from their sessions in the final thesis. All gave their permission and a number of participants, particularly the trainers and Directors of Studies, showed interest in the findings and took the opportunity to discuss implications for the way they conduct feedback sessions. No participants objected to the use of quotations or direct references to the behaviour of (unnamed) individuals.

### *3.3.2 Transcription*

The conversations were transcribed from the video recording using conventional orthography and the following symbols:

- [ Overlapping utterances
- = One speaker's utterance which is a continuous flow of speech but which has been separated in the transcript to show intervening interruption or response.
- Short, untimed pause within an utterance
- (3 secs) Timed pause. Pauses are timed to illustrate a point.
- (laugh) Description of para-linguistic feature: laugh, nod, smile etc.
- (inaudible) Part of the conversation which cannot be transcribed.

I decided to transcribe all the words uttered by the participants in the feedback sessions. This did not prove to be too difficult as the video recording was clear, the largest number of participants in any one session was five, and rarely did more than one participant speak at the same time. As the conversation was recorded I could view the video as many times as necessary in order to write down the words used. On only two occasions were small sections of the conversation inaudible.



I used standard orthography for the words uttered. Although the participants had a variety of accents, including Caribbean, and one had German as a first language, they all spoke standard British English as appropriate to teachers of the language, and any differences did not seem to be of significance to the aims of the study.

For ease of understanding standard punctuation such as commas are used, usually to indicate tone groups. Pauses (-) are also noted, and, because it was predicted that silence - delayed response or non-verbal response - could be significant, longer pauses are noted in (approximate) seconds (2 secs).

Sounds such as *Uhuh* and *Mmm* are included, and a note made of hesitations, 'false starts', or repeated sounds or words. Again, such features are interesting in an analysis of discourse and role, as indicative of the attitude and 'state of mind' of the speaker.

I also thought it useful to indicate overlaps, when more than one person is speaking at the same time, and to note as precisely as possible the timing of each participant's utterance in relation to those of others. This decision was made because interruption and overlap patterns can indicate power relationships between participants.

Certain paralinguistic features are described: gestures such as nods, smiles, grimaces, posture and eye contact. However, selection of such features is necessarily subjective: they are only noted if thought to be significant and/or add something to the communication which is not clear from the words alone. I did not think it worthwhile to note all paralinguistic features exhibited throughout the conversations, and such a transcription would have been prohibitively time-consuming to complete.

Information about the context in which the conversation takes place: the room, the furniture arrangement etc. is not included in the transcript itself, nor is information about any conversations the participants may have had previous to the one under scrutiny, or information about participant knowledge of the topics under discussion. However, the context - physical and temporal, and the 'setting' - and the background of the

participants, are discussed as part of the analysis of the conversations in *Chapter 4: The Participants and the Context*.

At the start of the transcripts themselves a note is made as to roles - trainer, trainee, teacher, DOS - but there is no further note made of the relationships between the participants, the power relations or any indication of the attitudes one participant may have to any other. Such notes would depend on interpretation and pre-empt analysis. However, these aspects are discussed, particularly in *Chapter 11: The feedback session: discourse, role and function*, as a result of analysis of the transcribed conversations.

The transcriptions are, therefore, as complete as I feel necessary for the purpose of my study. However, it is important to emphasise a point made by Green, Franquiz et al. (1997:172): that once a video-recording is transcribed it is a text that “re”-presents an event; it is not the event itself. For this reason the interpretation that I put on events is based on the fact that I have seen and heard the events on video, in addition to studying the transcribed words, an advantage not afforded to you, the reader.

### ***3.3.3 Questionnaires and interviews used in the study***

Each of the trainers giving feedback in the pre-service sessions, and the Directors of Studies giving feedback in the in-service sessions was interviewed. Those who gave feedback and who were later interviewed were promised that their responses concerning individuals would not be passed on to them and that none of the participants would be named in any publication. As noted on page 48, at the time of the interview the trainers and the DOSs did not know the precise aims of the research. This information was deliberately withheld so that they did not (consciously or unconsciously) gear their answers to meet my expectations.

I recorded the interviews on audio tape so that I could later make a summary of the responses using, wherever possible, the actual words used. (See Appendices 3 and 4.)

The following questions formed the basis of the interviews.

**A. Interview questions asked of both the trainers and the DOSs**

- 1 How did you decide which points to focus on?
- 2 Do you think the feedback you gave on this lesson was generally positive or negative? Why?
- 3 Do you think the trainee/teacher showed a positive or negative attitude to the feedback you gave?
- 4 What were your aims for the feedback session? What did you want to happen?
- 5 To what extent did you feel you achieved your aims? Did you do what you wanted to do?
- 6 Do you feel your relationship with the trainee/teacher to be 'special' when you are giving feedback? How would you describe the relationship?

Interviews 1 and 2.

The questions were aimed at eliciting the following information:

*1 How did you decide which points to focus on?*

By asking which points the assessors chose to focus on I hoped to gain insight into what they considered to be the main purpose or function of the 'meeting'. And whether the functions changed depending on the individual receiving feedback. The question might also elicit information as to how the assessor saw his/her role.

*2 Do you think the feedback you gave on this lesson was generally positive or negative? Why?*

This question was aimed at discovering the perception of the assessors about the way they gave feedback; whether their assessment of the negative/positive nature of their feedback accorded with my analysis of the discourse, and the assessment of the person receiving feedback. This could give information about the importance of linguistic



factors compared with non-linguistic factors, in determining the perception of the event by the participants.

3      *Do you think the trainee/teacher showed a positive or negative attitude to the feedback you gave?*

This question was asked in order to compare the assessor's view of the receiver's attitude with that expressed by the person him/herself.

4      *What were your aims for the feedback session? What did you want to happen?*

This question is similar to the first in that it attempts to tap into the assessor's view of the purpose of the feedback session. It is followed up by question 5:

5      *To what extent did you feel you achieved your aims? Did you do what you wanted to do?*

This question aims to reveal more about the assessors' view of the function of the session, their role, and whether they felt they had performed the role adequately.

6      *Do you feel your relationship with the trainee/teacher to be 'special' when you are giving feedback? How would you describe the relationship?*

The final question was an attempt to get the assessors to define their roles in the special context of the feedback session in more detail. The actual word 'role' was deliberately not used so as not to put words into the assessors' mouths. In their discussion of the relationship, insight into what the assessors considered the function, or functions, of the session may also be gained.

The responses given by the trainers to these questions are summarised in Appendix 3. The responses of the Directors of Studies are summarised in Appendix 4.

## **B. Questionnaires given to trainees and teachers**

Immediately after each feedback sessions the trainees from the pre-service sessions, and the teachers from the in-service sessions, were given a questionnaire to fill in, to return to me within a few days. Questions 1 and 2 on the pre-service questionnaire refer to the feedback given to all the trainees in the group that day.

### **B:1 Questionnaire given to trainees on pre-service course**

I am doing research on feedback. Could you spend a few minutes completing this questionnaire. I promise that your remarks will be received in the strictest confidence. I will not pass on any of the information you may give individually, to your tutor or to any other member of the teacher training team.

I would like your opinion of the feedback on your lesson that you received during this session. Could you please tick/complete these statements as appropriate.

- 1 I found the session as a whole useful.
- 2 I did not find the session, as a whole, very useful.
- 3 I found the feedback given by the tutor on my lesson useful.
- 4 I did not find the feedback given by the tutor on my lesson very useful.
- 5 While the tutor was giving me feedback I felt ....
- 6 Now, after feedback, I feel ....

Any other comments?

Questionnaire 1.

Answers to the questionnaire, given by the trainees on the pre-service course, are detailed in Appendix 3.

**B:2 Questionnaire given to teachers in the in-service sessions**

I am doing research on feedback. Could you spend a few minutes completing this questionnaire. I promise that your remarks will be received in the strictest confidence. I will not pass on any of the information you may give individually, to your DOS or to any other member of the course team, and you will not be named in any published work.

I would like your opinion of the feedback on your lesson. Could you please tick/complete the following statements.

- 1 I found the feedback given by the DOS on my lesson useful.
- 2 I did not find the feedback given by the DOS on my lesson very useful.
- 3 While the DOS was giving me feedback I felt ....
- 4 Now, after feedback, I feel ....

Any other comments?

**Questionnaire 2.**

The responses to the questionnaire, given by the teachers in the in-service sessions, are detailed in Appendix 4.

Those receiving feedback and who filled in a questionnaire were promised the following: “Your answers will be kept confidential; they will not be shown to the person who gave you feedback. You will not be named in any published work.” This promise of confidentiality was made in the hope that participants would be encouraged to give their opinions on individuals as honestly and fully as possible. At this stage the subjects did not know the detailed aims of the research so it was also hoped that they would be less likely to give answers they felt I expected or wanted.

In the questionnaire for the pre-service sessions there are statements which refer separately a) to the session as a whole, in which feedback was given to the two trainees whose lessons had been observed that day, b) the slot within the session in which the trainee’s own lesson had been discussed. This was to discover whether trainees would make statements about the sessions in general which were different from those they made about times when they were more personally involved.

The first set of eliciting statements (or questions) asked about ‘usefulness’ - a term which was deliberately non-specific. It was hoped that the questions would elicit information about what the trainees/teachers meant by ‘useful’ in the context of the feedback session. This would depend on their own understanding of the function of such sessions.

The second set of questions asked about their feelings. Again, these were very open-ended. It was hoped that their answers would give insight into their ideas about their role, the role of the other participant(s), and an idea of their own ‘agenda’ for the session. They were asked how they felt during and after the session in order to give them the opportunity to say whether their perception of the event altered on reflection.

Both questionnaires provided a space for the trainees/ teachers to write anything they chose about the sessions. Again it gave them the opportunity to discuss matters of importance to *them*, and perhaps to make comments about topics that I could not have predicted as being significant.

### 3.3.4 Selection of data

Although all the sessions have been transcribed, for the purposes of this study a selection of the transcribed sessions have been made - a case study approach has been taken in order to focus attention and to make the data manageable.

- One extract from a pre-service sessions which contains a complete feedback slot for an individual trainee. See *Appendix 1*. This extract is approximately 6% of the data collected from the pre-service sessions.
- A complete in-service session is included in *Appendix 2*. This represents approximately 11% of the data collected from the in-service sessions.

It is important that transcriptions of entire sessions are available for scrutiny so that individual utterances can be examined within the context of the surrounding discourse.

The extracts were chosen because they exemplify most of the categories under discussion. However, any of the extracts could have been included in their entirety. No features are claimed to be universal which are counter-indicated in any of the data not included in Appendices 1 and 2. Examples from those transcriptions of feedback sessions not included in their entirety will also be given to illustrate points where appropriate.

Appendices 3 and 4 contain complete data obtained from the interviews and questionnaires for all the participants in the study.

The sixteen pre-service sessions are referred to by number: 1- 16, and the nine in-service sessions are referred to by letter: A - I.

## 3.4 Terminology

In this section the terminology which is peculiar to Conversation or Discourse Analysis, and which will be used throughout this study, is noted and, where necessary, explained. Most commonly used 'specialised' terms can be grouped under two headings:

3.4.1 Terms commonly used in Conversation Analysis - to include *preferred/dispreferred response* and *politeness phenomena*.

3.4.2 Discourse acts

#### **3.4.1 Terms used in Conversation Analysis**

In many analyses of conversation, reference to certain concepts, terminology and descriptive terms occur regularly. For example, terms which were introduced by early workers in Conversation Analysis, and are referred to commonly in the literature include *turn-taking*, and *topic management*.

#### **Preferred and dispreferred responses**

Throughout the literature of Conversation Analysis the terms '*preferred*' and '*dispreferred*' are routinely used to describe language choice and patterns. As Greatbach says: "Within conversation analysis ... differences between the structural features of the turns and sequences in which agreements and disagreements are customarily packaged are described in terms of preference organization" (Greatbach 1992:273). This organisation described by Pomerantz (1984a), reflects a society's ranking of alternatives - what would be common or expected for the norms of a particular culture. There is distributional evidence that, in situations of choice, certain actions are avoided, withheld or delayed across large numbers of occasions involving a variety of speakers in a range of contexts. For example, when offering an opinion or assessment the first speaker accomplishes an action - for instance, he or she may praise, complain, compliment, criticise, brag or self-deprecate. By so doing the first speaker 'expects' or 'invites' one next action over its alternative - this is called the 'preferred response'. The terms 'preferred' and 'dispreferred' were used first to describe the language of 'everyday' conversations but have also been utilised in reference to talk in the institutional setting. Use will be made of these terms in both the review of the literature and in the description and analysis of research findings.

#### **Politeness phenomena**

Another set of terms that is regularly encountered is that which refers to *politeness* phenomena. Brown and Levinson (1978) claim that there are two principal aims of

communication: to co-operate and to maintain social relations. In order to maintain social relations, *politeness strategies*, such as *hedging*, using *euphemisms*, *understating*, are employed in conversation, particularly where there is a threat to the participants' *face*. These terms and related others such as *positive and negative strategies*, *face-threatening*, *on-record*, and *bald on record* will be employed, in particular when reviewing the literature and in the analysis of the conversations.

### 3.4.2 Discourse Acts

As Gall et al point out “one of the most critical steps of interpretational analysis is developing a set of categories that adequately encompass and summarise the data” (Gall, Borg et al. 1996:563).

The terminology used in this study, in order to label and categorise discourse acts, for example: *elicitation*, *directives* etc., is that first systematically used by Speech Act theorists and their followers, such as the Birmingham group; a taxonomy is set out by Tsui (1994:61).

Head act: primary class	<b>Initiating</b> (Initiation)	<b>Responding</b> (Response)	<b>Follow-up</b> (third-turn response)
Head act: subclass	<b>Elicitations:</b> questions; elicitations  <b>Informatives:</b> reports; assessments (criticism; compliments; self-criticism; self-commendation).  <b>Directives:</b> mandatives; advisives. <b>Requestives</b>	<b>Positive</b>  <b>Negative</b>  <b>Temporization</b>	<b>Endorsements</b>  <b>Concessions</b>  <b>Acknowledgements</b>

Figure 3 Adapted from Figure 3.2 in English Conversation: (Tsui 1994:61)

The initiating acts - *elicitation*, *requestive*, *directive* and *informative*, are subdivided further. For example, *directives* are subdivided into *advisives* and *mandatives*. Although

this terminology is not used consistently by all researchers in the field of Conversation or Discourse Analysis, Tsui's taxonomy is broad enough to encompass others' categories and terms. Where another term is used in the literature its equivalent in Tsui's taxonomy is noted. This terminology is further explained and exemplified in *Chapter 8: Discourse Acts*.

### **3.5 Summary of Chapter 3: Methodology and theoretical framework for analysis**

In this chapter the methodological problems associated with identifying and describing behaviour characteristic of a particular genre have been outlined. Conversation Analysis has been examined, together with related methodologies, and the case has been put for its appropriate use in this study. The advantages of utilising a wide range of data on the one hand, and the case study on the other, have been weighed.

The tools of investigation available for this type of study have been examined and a rationale given for the selection of a combination of observation, recording and transcription together with the use of questionnaires and interviews. Details have been given of the amount and type of data collected, and the reasons for the selection of the data included for scrutiny in this study.

I would now like to summarise the methodological framework within which this study will be conducted.

The first aim of the study is -

- *To describe and analyse conversations taking place within two sets of feedback sessions and to assess to what extent they exhibit features of 'institutional talk': to assess to what extent the feedback sessions contain features typical of other examples of talk at work, and how they differ from informal or non-institutional conversation. To determine to what extent the feedback session can be seen to belong to the type of discourse described as 'talk at work'.*



In order to achieve this first aim I propose to examine various aspects of both the pre-service sessions in which the participants are trainee teachers and teacher trainers, and the in-service sessions in which the participants are teachers and Directors of Studies. An assessment will be made as to what extent these feedback sessions exhibit characteristics of ‘talk at work’.

The first set of criteria to be described and examined are those related to the **participants** taking part in the sessions and the **context**. These are looked at under the following headings:

- 1        The participants: their background, role and power
- 2        The physical context within which the conversations take place
- 3        The temporal context
- 4        The setting, and orientation of the participants

Evidence for any generalisations made under headings 2 and 3 will be gathered from factual information made available by the institutions and the people who are the subjects of the study. For areas 1 and 4 above, in addition to factual information, evidence gathered from an analysis of the conversations will be presented, and from data given by the participants by means of interviews and questionnaires. Examples will be taken, and generalisations drawn, from the **full range** of data collected and analysed.

The second set of criteria to be looked at are those relating to **linguistic** and **paralinguistic** features of the sessions.

- the overall structure and organisation of the talk
- the way in which participants manage the talk through turn-taking , topic choice and topic management
- characteristic sequences and patterns
- typical discourse acts and the manner in which they are characteristically performed
- particular features of the conversation such as the use of politeness strategies and the choice of lexis.

In order to do this a **case study** approach will be used to present the data and to make generalisations about the two sets of data: an analysis will be made of the feedback given to one trainee within the feedback session, from the set of *pre-service* sessions, and of one complete feedback session from the set of *in-service* sessions.

The second and third aims of the study are -

- *To examine to what extent the discourse of the feedback session is created as a result of :
  - i) the roles of the participants as perceived by the participants themselves, and others not participating in the conversation.
  - ii) the function of the session as perceived by the participants based on their own expectations, and/or created by the expectations of the institutions for which they work - expectations either consciously or unconsciously expressed.*
- *To evaluate whether the feedback session can be counted as an example of the way in which “discourse identities and institutional roles are ... instantiated through talk” (Boden 1994:77), and to what extent the relationship between the discourse and the institution can be described as reciprocal and self-perpetuating.*

In order to do this, evidence will be taken from the conversations from both sets of data. In particular, the two sessions making up the case study will be used to exemplify findings. In addition, the interviews and questionnaires conducted with **all** the participants will be used to provide evidence of the participants’ perception of events.

As Labov has pointed out: “Data from a variety of distinct sources and methods, properly interpreted, can be used to converge on right answers to hard questions.” (Labov 1972:68). I propose a combination of methods in order to achieve the aims of the study: to combine the use of *etic* and *emic* approaches. The gathering of factual information, and the recording, transcription and analysis of interactions, using the methodology of Conversation Analysis, the analyst’s account, are *etic* in approach. The

tapping in of the participants' perception or account of events by means of questionnaires and interviews is *emic* in approach.

## **PART TWO**

### **THE FEEDBACK SESSION AS INSTITUTIONAL TALK: CONVERSATION ANALYSIS**

Having described the methodological framework I now turn to an analysis of the data. The seven chapters that follow make up Part Two of the study are entitled as follows:

<b>Chapter 4</b>	<b>The participants and the context</b>
<b>Chapter 5</b>	<b>Overall structure and organization of the talk</b>
<b>Chapter 6</b>	<b>Conversation management</b>
<b>Chapter 7</b>	<b>Conversational patterning</b>
<b>Chapter 8</b>	<b>Discourse acts</b>
<b>Chapter 9</b>	<b>Particular features of the discourse</b>
<b>Chapter 10</b>	<b>The feedback session as institutional talk</b>

Chapter 8 is considerably longer than the others as it is here that a detailed analysis is undertaken of the language, the discourse acts, used in the conversations.

In each of *Chapters 4-9* there are two parts:

- a review of the literature on the topic under discussion
- a description and analysis of the conversations that make up the data in this study

In *Chapter 10* the case is presented to include the feedback session within the category of institutional talk. This case is supported by evidence of features described in *Chapters 4-9*. Although dealt with in separate chapters many of the features are interlinked, with some brought about as a direct result of others. Where this is true cross-reference will be made and important links emphasised.

Both sets of data, that for the *pre-service* teacher training course and those taking place between *in-service* teachers and their academic manager, are dealt with in these chapters. It is noted where they are similar and where they differ. The sixteen pre-service sessions are referred to by number: 1- 16, and the nine in-service sessions are referred to by letter: A - I. Full transcripts of Session 1 and Session A are given in Appendices 1 and 2 as case study examples of the Pre-Service Sessions and the In-Service Sessions. I suggest

that the following chapters are read side-by-side with the transcripts in order to facilitate referencing and an appreciation of how excerpts fit into the whole text.

The analysis that follows in Part Two (*Chapters 4-10*) is etic in type. The bulk of the data described and analysed is taken from the conversations that were recorded and transcribed, as described in *Section 3.3*. Occasionally data from other sources is included if it serves to clarify or reinforce points, for example: information known by me about the participants or the institutions; information made available from the questionnaires filled in by the participants. However, in Part Two the findings presented are largely those obtained by means of observation - by *watching*. The perspective is that of the outsider. By contrast, in Part Three, the main methodology used is that of *asking* and a different viewpoint is brought to bear - that of the participants themselves. This emic perspective is joined with the etic perspective described in Part Two to enable a more detailed and multi-faceted description. In turn this combination of viewpoints should provide for a fuller discussion, and allow more meaningful conclusions to be drawn.

## CHAPTER 4: THE PARTICIPANTS AND THE CONTEXT

In this chapter the participants and the context of the feedback sessions are described, under the following headings:

- 4.1 The participants: their background, role and power
- 4.2 The physical context within which the conversations take place
- 4.3 The temporal context
- 4.4 The setting, and orientation of the participants

In each section there are two parts:

- 1 a review of the literature in the area under focus;
- 2 a description and analysis of the conversations that make up the data in this study, in order to determine to what extent they exhibit the characteristics identified in the literature.

### 4.1 The participants: their background, role and power

#### 4.1.1 *The participants: their background, role and power within the institutional context*

##### **Role**

Within an organisation or institution “who the parties are, relative to one another, seems to matter, and matter to *them*” (Schegloff 1992:105). In institutional settings, roles and related behaviour are much more easily recognised than in an ordinary conversation. There is often what Button (1992) refers to as a ‘special’ categorization of persons: for example, doctor/patient, interviewer/interviewee, chair/member of a committee, teacher/student, lawyer/client. The members of the pair can be generally described as ‘expert’/‘professional’, and ‘inexpert’/‘lay person’. Drew and Heritage have noted that often talk at work is between people playing these specific roles: an “exchange of talk between professionals and lay persons” (Drew and Heritage 1992:1).

The first role of the pair may well be one which is recognised by the profession concerned, perhaps marked by the conferring of a title, achieved after undergoing a

specific type of training, the gaining of particular qualifications. For example, Reynolds claims that the teachers' authority and their bases of power derive from their "pedagogic expertise - competence in the subject matter taught and learnt - and in the external legitimisation of their role as teacher" (Reynolds 1990:123).

### **Role and Power**

Many studies have been concerned with power and status and its distribution among social formations such as classes, ethnic groups, age-grade groups and gender. While these features cannot be ignored, and are often integral to an understanding of the behaviour of those engaged in institutional talk, it is the distribution of power attributable to the professional role which is of special interest in this study: "a concern with structured social relations which comprise organizations and occupational practice" (Schegloff 1992:103). Brown and Levinson recognise the relationship of role, power and context when they state that power is "a value attached not to individuals but to roles or role-sets. Thus in the role-set manager/employee ... asymmetrical power is built in" (Brown and Levinson 1987:78).

A common and distinguishing feature of the studies of talk within an institutional setting is the imbalance of power, the degree of control exercised by the participants, or an 'asymmetry' as ten Have (1991) terms the power relationship in his study of doctor/patient interaction. Drew and Heritage maintain that "in contrast to the symmetrical relationships between speakers in ordinary conversations, institutional interactions are characteristically asymmetrical" (Drew and Heritage 1992:47). This obtains where there is one participant who is the 'professional' and one the 'lay person', and where one represents the formal organization or institution and one does not. In a number of studies attention is directed towards how interactional asymmetries between participants in institutional settings are reflected in the discourse. The collection of papers in *Talk at Work* are described, on the back cover, as "illuminating exploration of how key aspects of an organization's work are managed through talk and of the distinctively asymmetric character of institutional discourse" (Drew and Heritage 1992).



Ten Have (1991) describes what he terms professional and lay ‘perspectives’. Coulthard and Ashby in their study of conversations between doctors and patients point out that the differentiation between doctor and patient in terms of certain language patterns “is relevant to sociological concerns with lay and medical conceptions” (Coulthard and Ashby 1976:78). As the participants are entering the conversation from these different perspectives there is a “differential distribution of knowledge, rights to knowledge, access to conversational resources” (Drew and Heritage 1992:49), whereas “in (everyday) conversation the participants generally assume that, while they may not always be equally knowledgeable and informed about every topic, such asymmetries will be short-lived and will shift among the speakers from topic to topic” (Drew and Heritage 1992:50).

This inequality can be very marked in certain very ‘formal’ contexts, for example a court of law, where conduct shaped by organisational and professional constraints and accountabilities are not familiar to, and sometimes not understood by, lay participants. The notion of formality/informality seems to be linked to the power relations of the participants. The more formal the context the greater the asymmetry of power between participants.

Boden, on the other hand, claims that in many organizations “‘boundaries’ are permeable because members’ categorization of who is ‘in’ and who is ‘out’ is variable” (Boden 1994:57). She feels that a great deal of human energy goes into creating and recreating invisible bonds and boundaries - establishing roles and power positions.

It is interesting to note to what extent the specific work situation and the roles played within the context can override the usual factors of age, class, gender, ethnicity and related power, although whether these factors have helped any particular individual to reach a position of power within the organisation is the subject of other studies.

Particular roles and degrees of power are reflected by particular patterns of behaviour, and in the overall shape and detail of the talk. Kress points out that within institutional genres “texts are constructed by more than one participant, one of whom has

significantly greater power assigned by the genre. The more powerful participant controls and shapes the text” (Kress 1989:19).

Drew and Heritage go on to make the point: “In many forms of institutional discourse there is a direct relationship between status and role, on the one hand, and discursive rights and obligations on the other” (Drew and Heritage 1992:49) and, in his study of talk between doctors and patients, ten Have (1991) contrasts the action repertoire of these participants with the model of symmetrical interaction assumed for informal conversation among peers.

Ten Have describes what he sees as “quite ‘natural’ interactional dominance by the physician, enacted through questioning, investigating and decision-making behavior, coupled with interactional submission by the patient, achieved through answering, accepting and generally complying with doctors’ orders and suggestions” (ten Have 1991:140). “Patients’ tasks mainly involve reporting their symptoms, answering questions and accepting physicians’ decisions while doctors are supposed to listen to complaints, to investigate the case and to decide on a diagnosis and treatment” (ten Have 1991:140). Harris notes that “a sequence of questions by the same speaker is nearly always interpreted as the maintenance of control of the discourse by that speaker” (Harris 1989:142).

The roles participants play can have social consequences beyond the period of the conversation, for it is “through language (that) actors selectively attend to the past - in particular to the relevant aspects of the past that will make sense of the present, and to that version of the present that will look credible in the future .. what ethnomethodologists call the retrospective-prospective nature of accounts” (Boden 1994:57). How they do this, and what importance an individual’s interpretation of events will be afforded, depends to some extent on the roles the participants play and the relative power attached to such roles.

Later in this chapter - *Sections 4.2 - 4.3* - we see how the more powerful participant influences certain aspects of the physical and temporal contexts by deciding where and

when the encounters take place, for example. And in *Chapter 6: Conversation Management* I look at how the imbalance in power is reflected in the detail of topic management, the relative rights and opportunities of the participants to speak, for how long and when. Sack's finding, in a number of his studies (1984, 1987), is that the central differences between casual, everyday conversations and interactions such as meetings, classroom lessons, and interviews (institutional meetings) depend primarily on such features as allocation and duration of turns, selection and order of potential speakers, and designation and order of topic.

#### ***4.1.2 The Participants: their background, role, and power within the feedback session***

##### **Background**

An analysis of the participants (see also Appendices 3 and 4) in both sets of sessions does not reveal any noticeable patterns that can be related to age, gender, race or general educational background. This is perhaps a surprising finding and would seem to contradict a number of studies which indicate the significance of these factors. Some detail to support this assertion is therefore needed.

The trainers in the pre-service sessions range in age from 28 to 46 and their trainees from 23 to 43; the DOSs in the in-service sessions range in age from 29 to 48 and the teachers from 26 to 56. The youngest trainers and DOSs are older than the youngest trainees and teachers. This is to be expected in that they have had to have some years' experience of teaching before being in a position to train others. However, apart from this, there is no pattern related to age - there are DOSs who are younger than the teachers they are giving feedback to, and trainers younger than the people they are training.

All the participants are white except one teacher, Donna, who is black, and all are native speakers of English except Sandra, a teacher who is a near-native speaker of English from Germany. There is a mix of male/female pairing. I could discern no significant differences in the way individuals behaved which could be attributed to factors of gender, age, race or nationality, although a number, as we shall see, related to role and function.

The participants have a similar educational/social background in that they are all graduates, so no significant differences in behaviour attributable to general educational background would be expected. However, as a prerequisite of their post the trainers and DOSs are required to have additional qualifications and experience in teaching English. They all have the *UCLES Diploma in Teaching English as a Foreign Language*, or equivalent, and a number have relevant MAs. The teachers in the study all have the *UCLES Certificate in Teaching English as a Foreign Language*, or equivalent. The trainees on the pre-service course, although they may have teaching qualifications, do not have qualifications or experience in teaching EFL.

### **Role and power**

While there are no discernible patterns in the conversations that can be attributable to the age, gender, race or *general* educational background of the participants there are, however, marked differences that seem to be related to the roles played by participants in the specific setting of the feedback session. The specific institutional situation and the roles played within that context can override the usual factors of age, class, gender, ethnicity, and related power.

The participants come to the sessions ‘wearing certain hats’ and belonging to two distinct groups: ‘expert’ or ‘professional’, and ‘inexpert/less expert’. They are known by titles: the ‘experts’ in the pre-service sessions are referred to as ‘TP (Teaching Practice) Tutor’ and the ‘non-experts’ are called ‘trainees’, or even ‘students’. In the in-service situation the ‘expert’ is known as ‘Director of Studies’, ‘member of the Senior Management Team’, or ‘Observer’; the ‘less expert’ are called ‘teachers’.

In all the sessions there is one participant who represents a formal organisation. In this study the DOS in the in-service sessions represents the Bell Educational Trust. It is through him or her that certain policies of the institution are carried out. The trainer in the pre-service sessions represents two institutions: the training institution (the Bell Language School, Cambridge) and the examining board (UCLES).

The pre-service session is similar to “an exchange of talk between professional and lay persons” (Drew and Heritage 1992:1). In the pre-service situation the trainer is the ‘expert’ and the trainee usually a ‘beginner’ in the profession. This is a much less accurate description of the DOS and the teacher. Although the DOS has been designated a ‘professional assessor’ by the institution, and therefore different from the teacher, it is interesting to what extent this distinction is reflected in the nature of the talk.

In Sessions B and C the role of DOS1 and DOS3 as ‘observers’ is recognised. This is DOS3’s opening remark:

#### Session C

DOS3 *OK, well thanks very much for letting me come along and see your lesson.*

DOS2 finishes the session in this way:

#### Session B

DOS2 *OK, John, thank you very much =*

[

John *Thank you*

DOS2 *= indeed for letting me come into your lesson. Thanks a lot.*

John *Thank you*

In fact by using the word *let* the DOSs are employing a politeness strategy, giving the impression that the teachers had a choice about whether to be observed or not; in reality they do not have that choice.

The roles of ‘observer’ and ‘person being observed’, and their significance, are also referred to in this example:

#### Session B

John *Yes. I was I was most pleased,*

DOS2 *Yes*

John *specially since I was being observed*

It is recognised that the DOSs have expertise - competence in the subject matter under discussion. They have their own experience as teachers to draw on. This practical experience gives credibility to their role as 'expert'. For example:

#### Session I

DOS6 *And what I've done sometimes is I've put up 'He is ... ing' in great big bold letters on a poster and I will sort of point to that*

The following comment by one of the DOSs is revealing. Normally the 'expert' imparts knowledge and the 'less expert' learns. Here DOS2's remark, and the way he says it, serves to point up the contrast, the fact that the eventuality is unusual or unexpected.

#### Session B

DOS2 ... *I learnt a lot myself...*

As is commonly found in the literature describing institutional talk, there is evidence in this study to show that the specific role-sets result in asymmetric power relations. The person who represents the institution has more power than the other participant(s). The consequences for the talk which result from the roles assumed by the participants will be detailed in *Chapters 5- 9*.

In particular, evidence for asymmetry will be presented through an analysis of the discourse, in the following areas:

- Overall structure and organisation of the talk (*Chapter 5*)
- Conversation management and patterning (*Chapters 6 -7*): there are unequal and rights and opportunities for taking turns and for selecting and managing topic.
- Discourse acts and particular features of discourse (*Chapters 8 - 9*): the different responsibilities and decision-making rights of the participants result in their use of particular discourse acts and language strategies.

Data obtained from the participants by means of questionnaires and interviews reinforces the view that power is closely associated with role. Further detailed examination of role

and power relations is undertaken in *Chapter 11: The feedback session: discourse, role and function*.

## **4.2 The physical context within which the conversations take place**

### **4.2.1 *The physical context and institutional talk***

The type of physical contexts that have featured as characterising talk at work range from the extremely formal - the courtroom (Pomerantz 1987, Harris 1989, Drew 1992, Atkinson 1992), the doctor's surgery, medical office or clinic (Sharrock and Anderson 1987, Bergmann 1992, Heath 1992, Maynard 1992, ten Have 1991)), the interview room (Button 1992), to contexts which can be more informal - the business meeting (Boden 1994), the classroom (Kress 1989, Reynolds 1990), the seminar (Bashiruddin, Edge et al. 1990), the Health Visitor's home visit (Heritage and Sefi 1992).

Institutional talk can take place away from the institution, for example in one of the participant's homes as in the case of the Health Visitor and client (Heritage and Sefi 1992) or over the telephone where one participant is in the institution and one is elsewhere - often at home (Zimmerman 1992). However, this is unusual. The more 'fixed' or established the location the more formal the encounter is likely to be.

Other factors interact with the notion of formality. For example, sometimes, as in a court of law, the talk is for an overhearing audience. Those conversations at the informal end of the range usually take place in private rather than public contexts and there is generally room within the conversation for considerable negotiation and/or stylistic variation. In other, perhaps more informal or private situations, the "understandings are often quite variable from interaction to interaction and from phase to phase in any interaction" (Drew and Heritage 1992:23-4).

In conversations in which one person is the 'expert' or 'professional' (see *Section 4.1 The participants: background, role and power*) and the other the 'less expert' or 'lay person' it is notable that the location of the conversation is usually that 'belonging to' the professional/expert, not the lay person, and the more formal the conversation the more

likely this is to be. So, for example, the formal court proceedings take place in a court room whereas some more informal meetings can take place on neutral ground or even in one of the participant's homes.

#### ***4.2.2 The physical context: the feedback session***

All the feedback sessions, in common with many institutional encounters, take place in the location 'belonging to' the professional. In the *pre-service* sessions the trainers and trainees are in a permanent teacher training school. For the trainers it is their normal place of work, a place with which they are familiar. The trainees' association with the school is temporary and short-lived, lasting only the duration of the course - four weeks. All but two feedback sessions were held in a classroom. Two of the pre-service sessions were held in a common room set aside for the purpose for a specified time.

In the *in-service* sessions the teachers and DOSs are in boarding schools hired by an educational institution (The Bell Educational Trust). Although the boarding schools are hired they are recognised by the participants as 'belonging', albeit temporarily, to the institution. Both participants are temporarily resident in the school for the duration of the course. The DOSs have usually had a longer association with the institution, and are in more senior positions, than the teachers. The sessions were held in the DOS's office.

So, in both sets of feedback sessions the session is arranged in a particular place - a place which 'belongs' more to the professional (the DOS or trainer) than to the teacher or trainee receiving feedback, and where the professional is at an advantage because of their familiarity with the place. S/he can decide how to arrange the furniture, and where the participants will sit.

The physical context of the feedback session suggests that the encounter is at the informal end of the range of institutional 'meetings', in that it is not held in a 'special' place such as a court room. However, if one of the features of the informal encounter is that it takes place in private rather than in public then a slight distinction can be made as regards the two types of session. In the pre-service session there is a small audience (which usually observes but which can and does sometimes participate): the other three



trainees in the group. The conversation between the trainer and the trainee is, therefore, not a private one, as it is between DOS and teacher. This would suggest that the pre-service session is somewhat more formal than the in-service session.

### **4.3 The temporal context**

#### ***4.3.1 The temporal context and institutional talk***

An aspect which has been noted as distinguishing the institutional conversation from the casual is that the time for such talk is often pre-arranged. Courtroom dates are set perhaps months in advance, meetings often arranged at the previous meeting or as part of a calendar of events, for example of a university. Doctors' and dentist's appointments can be made at short notice but they are almost invariably arranged in advance.

In institutional settings the time is generally determined by the professionals and those persons' other commitments. As ten Have (1991) points out the doctor decides the time of the meeting. Interviews are generally arranged at the convenience of the employer not that of the potential employee. Sometimes the lay person has no choice of time - as with a court hearing - whereas at other times their convenience is taken into account, for example with opticians' or dentists' appointments.

Within the period allotted for the 'conversation', time spent on different areas can be predetermined by means of an agenda, or checklist against which times have been put. In formal business meetings the chairperson is responsible for determining the agenda and the time devoted to items on the agenda. In a court of law there are very rigid rules concerning the order and timing of proceedings, the detail of which is determined by the judge or magistrate.

Often papers are brought to the meetings and help shape the timing of the encounter: minutes of the last meeting; reports to be presented. Meetings are minuted so that a record is kept of the 'conversation' and any decisions arising. Action points for individuals are also noted. In doctor/patient interviews the patient's case-notes may be referred to. Coulthard and Ashby identified certain questions which are produced in

medical interviews “according to a standard list”; the list is “not responsive to ongoing interaction but is predetermined” (Coulthard and Ashby 1976:83). In employment interviews such documents as job specifications, CVs and application forms are referred to at specific stages of the encounter.

Who is responsible for arranging the ‘meeting’, determining when it starts and finishes, setting and managing the agenda (whether written or assumed) is reflected in the organisation, the patterns and sequences of talk, the details of which will be examined later in *Chapters 5 - 9*.

#### ***4.3.2 The temporal context and the feedback session***

The feedback sessions have many features in common with those of other institutional interactions. All the feedback sessions in the study were pre-arranged: the sessions are part of the course timetable on the teacher training course. The convenience of the professional person and the institution is considered before that of the trainees; they have to fit in with a schedule arranged by the trainer for the group.

The in-service sessions are arranged individually between the DOS and the teacher. By contrast with the trainee in the pre-service session, the teacher may be asked for his or her preference regarding the precise time of the meeting.

The pre-service session is usually arranged to last a certain period; there are often constraints preventing the sessions from running beyond the allotted time: the next lesson, the room is needed for another purpose, the building must be vacated. There is less need for such time constraints where the in-service sessions are concerned. They are generally longer than the pre-service sessions, but vary more in length.

The trainer or DOS, acts as the ‘chair’ of the ‘meeting’; they always determine when the session shall start and finish. Invariably the trainers/DOSs open the formal proceedings of the meeting. In *all* the sessions, without exception, they are the people who speak first and determine the direction of the conversation. These examples are typical:

### Session 3

TR3 *OK. Tell me , tell me first of all about ...*

### Session B

DOS2 *Would you perhaps like to just er talk me through a little bit, looking back - you know - with the benefit of hindsight, as well as telling me what your plans and objectives for the lesson were.*

### **Agenda**

Within the period allotted for the ‘conversation’, time spent on different areas can be predetermined by means of an agenda. In both sets of sessions it is the trainer or the DOS who sets the agenda. A formal written agenda, as for a meeting, is not used; however, they usually have a checklist of items that they plan to deal with within the allotted time. It is recognised that it is the assessor’s responsibility to decide which items are dealt with in the session.

The DOSs and teachers have a feedback sheet (see Appendix 5), provided by the School, which forms the basis for a written schedule or agenda. Often the feedback form or checklist of items to be discussed is referred to by the DOSs, especially at the start, as the following excerpts demonstrate:

### Session D

DOS4 *Shall we erm go through go through this (referring to the feedback form) sort of stage by stage?*

Jack *Yes*

### Session F

DOS4 *Er how do you want to go through it? Do you want to go through this thing (the feedback sheet) and refer to my notes .. ?*

### Session A

DOS1 *OK, what did you put on the other side, (referring to the teacher’s copy of the feedback form). Yes, that you ‘changed variety’.*

### Session D

DOS4 *Do you ever, I've put here* (referring to her feedback form) - 'question' - "*Do you negotiate with them?*"

Even if they do not refer to the feedback form DOSs sometimes give the teacher an idea of the 'agenda' they have in mind for the session. For example:

### Session C

DOS3 *I'd like to sort of start talking about the group, and the lesson as a whole, and then we'll kind of go into er more detail.*

### Session B

DOS2 *Would you perhaps like to just er talk me through a little bit, looking back - you know - with the benefit of hindsight, as well as telling me what your plans and objectives for the lesson were.*

By contrast, in none of the pre-service sessions is the agenda made explicit. This is not to say that there are not common 'openings' to these conversations as we shall see later, in *Chapter 7, Section 7.1 Openings and Closings*. However, the trainers seem - consciously or unconsciously - to want to keep the trainees 'in the dark' about what is to come. It may be that they want the trainees to feel that they have a say in the agenda. This proposition is supported by the way the trainers often start by inviting the trainee to give *their* opinion of the lesson. However, in all the conversations in the study it is clearly the 'agenda' of the trainer not that of the trainee that is followed. This is demonstrated when a study of topic nomination and topic change is made in *Chapter 6*, below.

### **Paperwork, 'reports' and 'minutes'**

Both before and during the pre-service sessions the trainers make notes which they later turn into written feedback for the trainees. They can be seen as the equivalent of the agreed 'minutes' of the lesson and the resulting discussion that took place in the feedback session. A record of these 'minutes' is also kept on the trainee's file and later

referred to when the decision is made by the trainers about the grade awarded for the course.

For the in-service sessions the DOS also makes notes. Although the teachers are invited to give their perception of the lesson and their performance, it is the DOS's version which is later made into a written record of the event under discussion. The teacher receives a copy of the written feedback, together with any action points arrived at as a result of the discussion, and a copy is kept for the teacher's personnel file. This 'report' may be referred to when the future employment of the teacher is being considered.

In both sets of sessions, in addition to the notes the 'professionals' have made before the 'meeting', and the feedback form, there is paperwork related to the lesson: the lesson plan prepared before the lesson by the trainee or teacher, and sometimes copies of materials used in the lesson (handouts etc.). These various documents are referred to in the following examples:

#### Session A

DOS1 *Yeah they do. There's a nice atmosphere - I've written that down.* (DOS1 refers to her feedback form)

#### Session 2

TR2 *You had it in your lesson plan*

#### Session 1

TR1 *What happened in your lesson plan? - you had erm a jumbled er you were going to jumble it - we talked about it before*

#### Session C

DOS3 *Mmm, and I noticed on the handout that you gave me, which was erm a copy*

In the in-service sessions mention is sometimes made of the fact that there will be a permanent record of the session - similar to the minutes of a meeting. Also, reference is

made to future actions that will take place as a result of the sessions; these can be seen as equivalent to 'Action Points' noted during a business meeting.

#### Session D

DOS4 *If I can take that, and I'll clip it to mine, and that will go go into your file.*

#### Session D

Jack *Yeah, I've put all that and the idea is that's what I'll have to think about.*

#### Session F

Donna *Useful. Yeah, I'll go home and make some notes now.*

DOS4 *Well, I'll write this out now in erm in neat.*

Donna *OK*

DOS4 *Then if I give it to you, and you can add any other comments you want to. And we'll sign it.*

#### Session C

DOS3 *Erm but it might be worth considering in the future just putting a few things up on the board, so they know where it's leading. But basically a lovely lesson, and I enjoyed it very much. Thank you.*

This 'business-like' way of noting action points is not evident in the pre-service sessions, although reference to action arising from the present conversation is made in this extract:

#### Session 12

TR12 *... in your next lesson, what are you going to work on?*

### **4.4 The Setting, and orientation of the participants**

#### ***4.4.1 The setting, and orientation of the participants: institutional talk***

The location or physical entity of the institution may not be a defining factor if we accept Drew and Heritage's claim (1992) that the institutionality of an interaction is not determined by its physical context. What seems to be more important than a strictly physical or temporal context is an appreciation of the 'setting': the special function(s) of

the conversation and the roles played by the participants in realising the function(s). Button points out that, in 'talk at work', "the participants display an orientation to the setting, indeed build into their activities a situated specification of the setting, as in the details of their talk" (Button 1992:230). In his study of the behaviour of participants in job interviews, he focuses on "the way in which an orientation to the interview as a form of speech exchange is built into activities as relevant for their organization" (Button 1992:228). Drew and Heritage feel that there needs to be "an orientation by at least one of the participants to some core goal, task or identity conventionally associated with the institution in question" (Drew and Heritage 1992:22).

#### ***4.4.2 The setting, and orientation of the participants: the feedback session***

The feedback session is typical of 'institutional talk' in that it is usually held in a pre-arranged place and at a pre-determined time. However, it is not primarily the location or the pre-arranged nature of the event which marks it out as different from ordinary conversation, but the function of the conversation and the roles the participants play - the particular speech activities or tasks the speakers are engaged in.

Although the feedback session is usually held in an office or classroom it can take place in a less formal room - two of the pre-service sessions in the study took place in common rooms, for example. What is most notable is that, wherever the session is held, the participants display an orientation to the 'setting'.

There is evidence of an orientation by all participants to a core task, and to particular identities or roles. In none of the sessions does the conversation stray from a discussion of the observed lesson, the behaviour of the students, or the person teaching them. In every one of the sixteen pre-service sessions and the nine in-service sessions, without exception, the word 'lesson' is used in the first remarks made by the trainer or DOS. For example:

#### Session 2

TR2 *R, what did you think of Fran's lesson?*

### Session 13

TR5 *OK, Dina. Tell me , tell me first of all about your general feelings about the lesson and then about what you and Vanessa discussed.*

### Session H

DOS5 *Erm, right - well, I really enjoyed the lesson.*

### Session I

DOS6 *I thought it was a good lesson, Cath.*

In Session D mention of the word ‘lesson’ is the most delayed of all the sessions in the study, although it is anticipated by the cataphoric referent ‘it’:

### Session D

DOS4 *Er how do you want to go through it? Do you want to go through this thing (referring to her feedback form) and refer to my notes ..*

Donna *Yes*

DOS4 *.. or do you want to, or we could go through through the lesson from beginning to end?*

At the start of all the sessions *discussion of the lesson* is thus established as the task to be mutually accomplished. In the extracts above, the role of the participants as the teachers of the lesson is also recognised, in particular through the use of ‘*your lesson*’, ‘*Fran’s lesson*’, but even ‘*the lesson*’ where both participants have shared knowledge of which lesson is under discussion.

In some sessions ‘the lesson’ is also referred to in the closing remarks.

### Session B

DOS2 *OK, John, thank you very much*

John *Thank you*

DOS2 *indeed for letting me come into your lesson. Thanks a lot*

John *Thank you*



### Session C

DOS3 *But basically a lovely lesson, and I enjoyed it very much. Thank you.*

Judy *Thank you.*

A recognition that the ‘task’ of the meeting has been achieved is implicit in the closing remarks.

Because of their orientation to the specific setting of the feedback session the participants behave differently from when they meet on other occasions, even if in the same location. I have observed that the conversations that take place in the common rooms between the same participants on less formal occasions (during a coffee break, for example) are very different from those of the feedback session. Although not as formal as, for example, proceedings within a courtroom, the feedback session is characteristically different from a social conversation, even one on the same general topic of teaching or the students in a particular class. The sessions that made up the data exhibit features of action and social relations that are characteristic of a particular setting.

### **4.5 The participants and the context: summary and conclusions**

The context and the participants of the feedback session demonstrate characteristics in common with other institutional interactions in the following areas.

As in many of the **relationships between participants** in institutional settings described in the literature, those in the feedback session fall into the categories or ‘expert’ and ‘non-expert’ or ‘more expert’ and ‘less expert’. **Asymmetry of power** is a marked characteristic of institutional talk and there are clear indications that the roles assigned to, and recognised by, the participants in feedback sessions have consequences for the power relationships within the encounter. These, in turn, influence the behaviour of the participants both during the session, as exhibited in the talk, and subsequently.

The **physical context** of the encounter belongs to the ‘expert’. However, although held in the institution, other aspects of the ‘place’ indicate that the sessions are towards the ‘informal’ end of the formal/informal range of institutional encounters. The pre-service sessions can be considered more public, and therefore ‘formal’, than the in-service sessions.

For all the feedback sessions, as with other kinds of ‘meetings’ at work, a **period** was set aside for the express purpose of having a specific kind of conversation. The arrangements for the pre-service are more formal than for the in-service sessions, where timing is more flexible.

As with other institutional ‘meetings’, there is preparation to be done and an **agenda** prepared (albeit an informal one). In common with other institutional meetings, there is paperwork to be brought and follow-up work to be done after the meeting. Formal records are kept on certain aspects of the ‘meeting’. Again the in-service sessions seem to be less formal than the pre-service as both participants have copies of the form that shapes the ‘agenda’.

The sessions that made up the data exhibit features of action and social relations that are characteristic of a particular **setting**. The institutional nature of the setting is clearly one to which all participants are oriented, they have clear ideas as to the purpose of the meeting, their role and the roles of the other participant(s).

From a focus on the participants and the context I now turn to an examination of the *overall structure* and the *detail* of institutional conversations in general, and the feedback sessions in particular, in *Chapters 5 - 9*. However, after a *summary* of the feedback session as institutional talk in *Chapter 10*, I will return to focus on the participants once again in *Chapter 11: The feedback session: discourse, role and function*.

## CHAPTER 5: OVERALL STRUCTURE AND ORGANISATION OF THE TALK

From an examination of context and participants we now turn to focus on the talk itself. However, the close relationship between the roles of the participants, their perception of the function(s) of the interaction, and the resulting talk must be constantly held in mind. After reviewing studies of the *overall shape* of institutional discourse in this chapter, *Chapter 5*, there is an examination of the *detail of organisation* that goes to make up the overall structure, in *Chapters 6-7*. *Chapter 8* focuses on the detail of the language used in terms of *discourse acts*, and *Chapter 9* looks at *particular features* of the discourse.

This chapter starts with a review of studies which have focused on *the overall structure* or shape of institutional conversations, and then goes on to analyse the data in order to determine to what extent the feedback sessions are similar, in this respect, to institutional encounters as described in the literature.

### 5.1 Overall structure and organisation of institutional talk.

The following statements might be claimed for all conversations: “What one speaker says at any point in the conversation process affects what other speakers can and will say” (Tsui 1994:5). “At any point in the discourse there are only a limited number of choices available to the next speaker *if the discourse is to remain coherent*” (Tsui 1994:19).

In institutional talk the choices seem to be even more limited and predictable as a result of the roles played by the participants and the related power relationship. Boden claims that there is a typical shape to institutional talk. “Many kinds of institutional encounters are characteristically organised into a standard ‘shape’ or order of phrases. Conversations, by contrast, are not”; they are bounded in time and space - they “have a beginning, a middle and an end” with “noticeable and analyzable openings and closings” (Boden 1994:87).

The typical work-orientated occasion for talk is the meeting with its characteristic features and sequences: “meetings are where organizations come together” (Boden

1994:81). Within the term ‘meeting’ can be included a number of encounters to which labels are already attached: *interviews, consultancies, appraisals*. The common factor is that they are all typical of talk that is associated with inferential frameworks and procedures that are peculiar to specific institutional contexts.

As noted in *Section 4.1*, participants play certain roles within the institutional encounter. “Meetings are the proper arena of organizational activity for management, locating and legitimating both individual and institutional roles” (Boden 1994:81). She describes a meeting as “a planned gathering ... in which the participants have some perceived if not guaranteed role” and which has “in some general sense, an organizational function (Boden 1994:84). Boden goes on to identify the purpose or function of the talk in the meeting as determining its shape. Drew and Heritage agree: “the activities are often implemented through a task-related standard shape” (Drew and Heritage 1992:43). Boden (1994) notes that certain actions, which might not be usually found in a conversational context may be common in institutional contexts, whereas certain conversational actions may be avoided. Drew and Heritage concur: “functionally related standard sequences are beginning to be found to characterize certain institutional interactions and which give them the kinds of overall structure which conversations generally do not have” (Drew and Heritage 1992:44). Coulthard and Ashby (1976:78) note that “the doctor actively seeks the relevant information in a structured way”, and Clayman claims that “it is through the context-sensitive deployment of formal interactional practices that a sequence of talk betrays its ‘institutional’ character.

Boden claims the existence of “Organizational Agendas” (Boden 1994:17) within work contexts: “members, whether in courtroom, doctor’s office, plea-bargaining or bureaucratic meeting ...have organizationally relevant reasons for pursuing specific tasks in talk” (Boden 1994:164). By following these agendas the participants are fulfilling a particular role and getting a specific job done. Atkinson, in his description of law court proceedings, refers to institutional talk being prescribed by a ‘written schedule’ or ‘formal agenda’ and goes on to discuss the link between certain sequences and the activities and outcomes in the proceedings: “the identification of recurring sequence type

raises a number of intriguing questions about its interactional implications” (Atkinson 1992:204).

Button (1992:214) describes the job interview as being composed of ‘episodes’ within a particular ‘activity’, terms introduced by Levinson (1992), and by sequences of talk. He uses the interview as a prime example of a conversation within a work setting: “the interview is composed of a series of talk and .. it is only when their organization is examined that the social setting and social-setting activities and interactions can be rigorously grasped as analytical objects” (Button 1992:214). He asks what makes an interview recognisable and concludes that it is how the participants structure their interactions with one another that characterises the interview: it is because of the way that “the interview as a social occasion is organized” (Button 1992:228).

Conversation Analysis aims ‘to discover the systematic properties of the sequential organization of talk, and the ways in which utterances are designed to manage such sequences” (Levinson 1983:287). Within institutional conversations certain types of sequences are often present. For example, Coulthard and Ashby (1976:83) identified certain “ritual series of questions” which are produced in medical interviews. Ten Have also notes certain patterns and sequences in the medical interview: “the literature ... suggests two major trends in the interactional style taken by physicians in their dealing with patients, one of monopolizing initiatives, and another of withholding information” (ten Have 1991:141). If the common types of adjacency pairs are examined, it can be observed that initiatives that are followed by specific kinds of second actions, for example questions, orders, proposals, are mostly taken by doctors and are dispreferred when taken by patients. Coulthard and Ashby note that “a large part of the interview ... consists of the doctor eliciting information from the patient ... the development of the discourse is tightly controlled by the doctor, who decides whether and when the patient shall transmit that information” (Coulthard and Ashby 1976:76). This asymmetry of initiative can be claimed to be typical of other conversations that take place in the work setting.

Although generally the primary contrast is that made between the patterns and sequences that distinguish ‘talk at work’ from everyday social conversations it has also been noted that institutional conversations vary in their degree of formality (see *Section 4.2.1: The physical context and institutional talk*, above) which, in turn, is reflected in the shape of the conversation. Sacks (1984) observed that interactions such as meetings, interviews, debates and the more ritualistic of ceremonies span a kind of continuum. Boden (1994) agrees and points out that within any institution there is generally a wide range with different types of encounter having their own typical shape and set of sequences.

So, the evidence from the literature suggests that institutional encounters have a typical shape, and exhibit characteristic features and sequences. There are certain features such as typical openings and closings, certain sequences, for example a series of questions, which identify them not only as ‘talk at work’ but a particular type of talk at work - an interview, consultation etc.. Institutional encounters seem to conform to a type of framework or structure which is lacking in social conversations. This structure is determined by the purpose of the encounter and the roles played by the participants - the way they control and shape the discourse; the more formal the encounter is in institutional terms, the more structured and rigid the resulting framework. So, for example, courtroom proceedings or the ceremony of the opening of parliament are extremely formal occasions and this is reflected in the structure and organisation of the talk. By contrast, a telephone call between colleagues to arrange a meeting, while still ‘talk at work’, will be much less formal and predictable.

## **5.2 Overall structure and organization of the talk: the feedback session**

In the same way that Button (1992) asks what makes an interview recognisable, we may ask what makes a feedback session recognisable and come to the same conclusion that it is how the participants “structure and organize their interactions with one another that achieves for some social settings its characterizability” (Button 1992:229).

In order to claim ‘institutional status’ for the feedback session it must be demonstrated that it exhibits features of structure and organisation found in other types of institutional

talk; features that distinguish institutional talk from social conversations. Evidence to support the claim for a characteristic institutional **framework** will be presented in this section. In *Chapters 6-9* the **detail** that supports the framework will be examined.

In order to describe the overall shape of the two types of feedback sessions, Session 1 and Session A will be analysed as typical examples of the Pre-Service Session and the In-Service Session, respectively. (See Appendices 1 and 2).

#### The Pre-service Session: Session 1

In this session there are five participants: the trainer TR1, and four trainees - Cath, Andrea, Polly and Lara. The lesson taught by one of the trainees, Cath, is being discussed. All five participants were present when the lesson under discussion was taught. The feedback session was followed immediately by another which dealt with the lesson taught by one of the other trainees present.

#### The In-service Session: Session A

In this session there are two participants: the Director of Studies - DOS1, and a teacher - Sue. The lesson taught by Sue and observed by DOS1 is being discussed. The session was separate from any other feedback sessions given by the DOS.

### **5.2.1 Participation**

Session 1 is typical of the pre-service sessions in terms of the participation of those present. In all the pre-service sessions in the data the average participation, as measured by the number of words uttered by the trainee receiving feedback as a percentage of the total number of words uttered by all participants in the session, is 23%. The average participation of the trainer is 64%. On average, 13% of the talk in pre-service sessions is done by trainees not receiving feedback in that particular session so the total trainee/trainer split is 36%/64%.

Session 1 is very characteristic of the Pre-Service Sessions studied in that, of the 1878 words spoken, the trainer speaks 1200 (64%) while Cath, the trainee whose lesson is being discussed, produces 22.4% of the words. The trainer takes 88 turns to the

trainee's 75. However, the average turn-length of the trainer is much longer than that of the trainee; he has only 5 one-word utterances while the trainee has 48.

Session A is also typical of its type - the in-service feedback session. In the nine in-service sessions in the data, the average participation, as measured by the number of words uttered by the teacher receiving feedback as a percentage of the total number of words uttered by both participants in the session, is 40.6%. The average participation of the trainer is 59.4%. In Session A the DOS spoke 59.3% of the words to the teacher's 40.7%. As there are only two participants in in-service sessions one could argue that, by definition, the number of turns should be equally distributed. However, there are occasions when two distinct turns by the same participant can be identified - separated by a pause or a non-verbal response; for example: Session A - Lines 123, 178, 211. The DOS in Session A took 81 turns to the teacher's 76. Of these 24 were one-word responses while the teacher uttered 22 one-word responses and made 5 non-verbal responses (nods, and laughter).

Quantifying the data in this way can be a useful indication of overall structure. However, such an approach has its limitations. We need to look in more detail at the contribution between the trainer/DOS and the trainees/teacher for a more meaningful pattern to emerge.

### **5.2.2 *Patterns of interaction***

There are distinct patterns of interaction that can be identified, depending on the stage of the session and the tasks to be achieved. At the beginning of the sessions it is usual for the trainee/teacher to have relatively long turns as they provide 'reports' - descriptions or accounts of the lesson. The assessors' turns tend to be shorter at this stage. Further into the session the pattern changes as the trainer/DOS takes longer turns in which they give their assessments. During the later stages of the session the trainees'/teachers' turns tend to be short, or non-existent if their responses take a non-verbal form.



### The Pre-Service Session

At the start of Session 1 the trainees are asked by the trainer to give 'reports': Cath gives her report in Lines 5-6, 14, 20-22, after the trainer has asked her how she felt about her lesson in Line 1. TR1 invites the trainee Andrea to give her report (Lines 23-24) which she does: Lines 25 - 32. In Line 34 the trainer asks the other two trainees, Polly and Lara, to report, and Polly takes up the invitation in Lines 35 -36.

The longer contributions made by the trainee, Cath, are clustered at the beginning of the conversation. She has only two other relatively long turns, between Lines 97 - 101, and again between lines 246 - 249. In both of these turns she is justifying or excusing criticism that has been levelled against her. By the end of the session the trainer has completely taken over the conversation - acknowledged by him in the last line (Line 286):

TR1 *Funny, it seems to be me talking.*

### The In-Service Session

In the In-Service Session, Session A, the teacher is invited by the DOS to give her 'report', in Line 1:

DOS *So how did you feel the lesson went?*

She gives her initial report between Lines 2 and 24. In doing this she takes longer turns than the DOS. Between Lines 25 and 110 there is a fairly equal turn-taking pattern - Sue continues to report on her lesson, prompted by the DOS, who also adds comments. After Line 111 the pattern of interaction changes. The DOS takes on the task of evaluation and direction. She takes the long turns, while many of the teacher's turns are restricted to one-word utterances or non-verbal response. Sue's only significant long turn (Lines 231 - 236) takes the form of justification for her actions in the face of perceived criticism.

In sum, the assessors speak more during the sessions than the other participants. This is achieved by taking, on average, longer turns. In the pre-service session the assessing and directing stages of the trainer take up more of the session than the reporting stages of the

trainee. This is also true of the in-service session, though not to such a marked degree. As “many patients fail to accept invitations to take the floor for any length of time” (Hughes 1982:362) so trainees/teachers at certain stages of the feedback - notably the end of the session - do not attempt to contribute. What is notable is that there are few instances in which the participants make alternative exchanges of equal or near equal length, as would be expected to occur in ordinary, social conversation between friends.

### **5.3 Overall structure and organisation of the talk: summary and conclusions**

Both examples of sessions demonstrate patterns of participation and interaction that characterises it as belonging to an institutional genre. There is a typical shape to the sessions of the kind that Boden (1994) claims as typical of institutional talk, a “task-related standard shape” (Drew 1992:43), and the purpose or function of the talk can be seen to determine this shape. The feedback session would seem to qualify for inclusion in Boden’s (1994) category of ‘meeting’ with its characteristic features and sequences, and its association with inferential frameworks and procedures that are particular to the institution. In addition to the presence of particular ‘institutional’ features, certain conversational actions which would be considered appropriate in an everyday conversational context are avoided.

Although they can both be identified as ‘talk at work’ there are differences between the two sets of sessions, related to the specific function of the session and roles as perceived by the participants. These differences will be examined further in *Chapters 10 and 11*.

In the overview of the overall framework of the encounters given in this chapter, details of organisation such as turn-taking patterns and topic choice have been touched upon. In the next chapter, *Chapter 6: Conversation Management*, these aspects undergo closer scrutiny.

## CHAPTER 6: CONVERSATION MANAGEMENT

There have been a number of studies which have explored the *detail* of discourse management within the work context. In common with all conversations, basic conversational organisation strategies are employed, such as repair, interruption, topic shift, but it is claimed that in the work situation they are used by participants to manage particular role-specific activities; they are being fitted or adapted to specialised interactional tasks.

In all the studies the influence of the role and relative power of the participants on the management of the conversation is recognised (see also *4.1 The participants: their background, role and power*, above). *Chapter 5* looked at the influence of the role and the relative power of the participants on the *overall shape* of the encounter. In this section I examine, in more detail, aspects that seem to influence the organisation of conversation, and to assess whether the feedback sessions are similar, in these respects, to other institutional conversations.

Two aspects of conversational management which have received particular attention from those studying ‘talk at work’ are:

- turn-taking
- topic management

### 6.1 Turn-taking

#### 6.1.1 Turn-taking in institutional talk

A number of studies in the literature indicate that institutional encounters are characterised by predictable turn-taking routines. Boden (1994), for example, claims that business meetings are unlike more casual conversations as they contain some rather specific turn-taking patterns. The *formality* of the occasion for talk affects the turn-taking patterns and the lengths of turns. Very formal proceedings, such as law court hearings, are constrained within sharply defined procedures and conventions and have more predictable turn-taking routines than in more informal meetings between colleagues

(Drew and Heritage 1992). Atkinson in his study of conversation within a law court suggests that formal settings have systematically distinctive forms of turn-taking, and that particular conventions operate. He notes that, in the courtroom setting, “roughly speaking, it appears that the more that people are permitted to say what they want to say, the less formal will the procedures be deemed to be, and vice versa” (Atkinson 1992:211). This is a generalisation that seems to apply to other conversations in the work context.

A higher frequency of **long turns** are to be found in institutional as compared with ‘everyday’ conversations: participants often provide reports, accounts or position statements. In meetings a long turn is sometimes elicited at the beginning or, as ten Have notes about doctor/patient encounters, the doctor “provides for a story to be told” (ten Have 1991:144). During long turns in which reports are being delivered longer pauses are allowed without someone else taking up the turn, as the other participants seem reluctant to interrupt an unfinished report.

In more informal encounters, such as business meetings between colleagues who know each other well, the turn-taking order and length is less predictable. Institutional encounters at the very end of the informal range approach those of social conversations. Boden (1994) suggests that different types of meetings invoke their own turn-taking rhythms; for example in meetings at the informal end of the range neither the turn-taking order nor the length of the turn is fixed. However, the presence of participants playing certain roles can result in particular patterns. She maintains that in informal meetings talk most approximates to the conversational turn-taking model, with the general exception that long turns are more common: participants provide reports, accounts and position statements.

Many of the turn-taking patterns can be associated with the fact that there is a power imbalance present in many institutional conversations. There is normally a person with more power than the other(s) - the chairperson at a business meeting, the ‘professional’ in a doctor/patient, lawyer/client, teacher/student encounter. The person with more power generally takes more turns and initiates topic change (*see Section 6.2: Topic*

*choice and topic management* ). This person is also usually self-selecting; the person(s) with less power does not self-select so often, especially if in a large group. Passing turns are used by those in control to manage change and closure. They can select or invite others to speak; this is exemplified in the rights of the chairperson at a meeting. Ten Have claims: “the doctor has the initiative and the patient is restricted to a responding role” (ten Have 1991:143). Hughes (1982), commenting on talk in the medical consultation, points out that the imbalance of specialist knowledge results in practices that amount to a form of ‘control’ by the professional over the lay person and has a strong influence on the resulting talk. Even when invited to do so “many patients fail to accept invitations to take the floor for any length of time” (ten Have 1991:362). In sum, within the institutional encounter turn-taking rights are unequal.

### ***6.1.2 Turn-taking in the feedback session***

An examination of the feedback sessions reveals turn-taking features which mark the encounter as characteristic of institutional talk.

The trainers in the pre-service sessions are generally **self-selecting**. In all the sessions, both pre-service and in-service, the assessor takes the first turn to get the ‘business’ under way. For example:

#### Session 13

TR3 *OK, Dina. Tell me - tell me first of all about your general feelings about the lesson and then about what you and Vanessa discussed.*

#### Session D

DOS4 *Erm - do you want to start with telling me what you - what you thought about the lesson or -*

#### Session G

DOS2 *Would you like to say something about the lesson that I came in to see this morning?*

In the pre-service sessions, where there are a number of participants, the trainer takes the role of chairperson whose prerogative it is to **nominate** the next speaker. I have already noted (Phillips 1993) that turns are often taken at the invitation of the trainer. For example, in Session 1 the trainer starts by nominating Cath, in Lines 1-4:

Session 1

TR1 *Cath, having talked to Andrea. You were on first - how do you =*

[

Cath

*Umm*

TR1 *= feel about your lesson?*

Later he brings in Andrea (Line 23):

TR1 *What were you prompting Andrea? What were your questions? Were they relevant ones?*

In Line 34 he nominates Polly and Lara, then decides which trainee shall speak - Polly:

TR1 *Polly? Lara? Polly what did you think about it?*

The trainees seldom select themselves or the trainer; they are limited to taking their turns on cue from the trainer. In Session 2 a rare instance occurs. Here one of the trainees, Ruth, indicates that the self-nomination is unusual by saying:

Session 2

Ruth *Can I say something?*

Earlier in the session when Ruth had tried to take an unnominated turn the trainer stops her, and nominates Fran, the trainee whose lesson is being discussed and whose 'report' had been interrupted.

Session 2

Fran *I think one of the things well I think one of the things I would have done is what Ruth's just suggested cos I think that would have been that would have been quite a fun activity and I think I would have cut out some of the writing.*

TR2 *Right*

Ruth *I think the opportunity*

[

TR2 *Just a minute. Let's hear from Fran. - Sorry?*

Fran *There was too much writing.*

One way that trainees can be self-nominating is by asking a question. This is a relatively rare occurrence, however, as we shall see when question and response are looked at in more detail in *Section 8.1.1*. In Session 1 there is just one example, at Line 271. The trainee, Lara, makes a contribution unprompted by the trainer, in the form of a question which she pursues over several turns. At the same time as nominating herself to speak she is nominating the trainer by addressing her question to him.

#### Session 1

TR1 *So*

[

Lara *Would you put in a bit more in because of their age? If they were elementary would you look at the style of the text?*

TR1 *If I could, yes.*

Lara *Even so*

[

Cath *Because it personalises it doesn't it, "What do you feel about it?"*

Lara *But, but if they were really young?*

The trainer or DOS almost invariably takes the turn following a period of silence in the conversation, when the topic seems to be exhausted. For example, in Session 1 the trainer fills the silence at Line 78, and again at Line 80 when his invitation to the others had not been taken up, at Line 131, and at Line 178. Silences are not so frequent in the two-person conversations of the in-service sessions. However, there are examples in Session A at Line 124 and Line 212. The assessors often take the opportunity afforded by the silence to initiate a new topic. The way the 'professionals' control topic is examined in more detail in *Section 6.2: Topic choice and topic management*.

In addition to the features arising from unequal turn-taking rights other characteristics typical of institutional encounters are found in the feedback sessions. As already noted, in *Section 5.2: Overall structure and organization of the talk: the feedback session*, in both types of feedback session the assessors, the ‘professionals’, take **more, and longer, turns** than the other participants. It is particularly marked in the pre-service sessions in which the speaking time of the trainer is more than the others’ combined - an average 64% of the total session.

As noted in *Section: 5.2.2 Patterns of interaction*, within feedback sessions long turns are to be found at certain stages of the session. For example: the trainees or teachers often take long turns at the start of the session as they report on the lesson; in the middle section of the encounter the turns of the assessor and the teacher/trainer are more equal in length - this is particularly true of the DOS/teacher exchanges which are characteristically made up of question/response sequences. The end of the sessions are characterised by long turns taken by assessors as they evaluate the lesson and make suggestions for improvements.

In the pre-service session, Session 1, it has already been noted (page 93) that the trainee, Cath, takes most of her long turns in the first part of the conversation. Throughout the session the trainer takes long turns. From Line 155 until the end of the session he takes a number of extended turns with the trainee making no more contribution than a word or sound of acknowledgement. Her only significant turn is between Lines 146-149.

In the in-service session, Session A, the conversation can be divided into three sections. At the start, until Line 24 the teacher, Sue, reports on her lesson. She takes longer turns than the DOS, who at this stage often restricts her response to sounds of acknowledgement. Between Lines 25 - 110 the turn-taking is fairly evenly balanced between the two participants in terms of length - the DOS is questioning, and commenting on the teacher’s responses. From Line 111 until the end of the session the DOS takes a number of long turns as she assesses the lesson and makes suggestions. The teacher during this stage, apart from a few longer turns at Lines 231 - 236, 249 - 252, largely restricts her responses to words or signs of acknowledgement or agreement.



In sum, the turn-taking patterns exhibited in both types of feedback session are very similar to those noted in other institutional encounters, such as those between doctor and patient, and dissimilar to social conversations in which much less predictable turn-taking patterns are to be found. However, there are differences, of degree rather than of kind, to be found between the two sets of feedback session. One of the jobs of the trainer in the pre-service session is to 'chair' a meeting in which there are five participants. There is a need for nomination and turn allocation which is absent in the in-service meeting.

## **6.2 Topic choice and topic management**

After turn-taking patterns, the second aspect of conversational management to be focused on in this chapter is that of topic - how the subject areas of conversation are selected and managed, and by whom.

### ***6.2.1 Topic choice and management in institutional talk***

The topic of the conversation and how topic management is achieved has been the focus of many studies of talk at work. Schegloff notes that "not all talk at work is work talk. But some talk in work settings is fully taken up with working, and that has substantial consequences for the talk" (Schegloff 1992:117). The institutional setting may often involve special and particular constraints on what one or both participants will treat as "allowable contributions to the business in hand" (Drew and Heritage 1992:23). In other words, the participants usually enter the conversation with an awareness of which topics are appropriate.

In many studies of one-to-one encounters in the work setting it is noted that the major topic of the conversation describes the actions or state of one of the participants: that of the interviewee in the interview (Button 1992) the patient in the medical consultancy (Maynard 1992, Heath 1981), the appraisee in the appraisal, and the trainee or teacher in the feedback session (Phillips 1994). On all these occasions it is the behaviour of the person with least power and/or knowledge which is the topic of conversation.

Ten Have (1991) notes ‘asymmetry of topic’ as another hallmark of the institutional talk between doctor and patient. The professional has knowledge of and control over the topic and, as Hughes notes in commenting also on doctor/patient talk: “this version of control may .. operate to limit patients’ opportunities to offer elaboration or introduce new points at those junctures of the interaction where they might otherwise have had more to say” (Hughes 1982:374). He agrees with ten Have’s point by noting that “many of the features which most clearly distinguished the spoken exchanges in consultations from talk in ‘everyday’ settings reflected the fact that a series of topics had to be raised and organised in relation to a body of specialist knowledge with which one party was not familiar” (Hughes 1982:361).

Coulthard and Ashby (1976) define the highest analytical unit within discourse, the transaction, as “a series of exchanges concerned with a single topic”. They go on to say that “typically the GP interviews have two, one concerned with the discovery of the problem, the second with prescribing” (Coulthard and Ashby 1976:85).

The topics of the work conversation are often predetermined in their detail by means of an agenda. They are unlike more casual conversations since they have “a generally predetermined topic or topic agenda” (Boden 1994:89). As noted above in *Section 4.3: The temporal context*, the more powerful person in the encounter often works through a predetermined ‘standard list’ as noted by Coulthard and Ashby (1976).

### ***6.2.2 Topic choice and topic management in the feedback session***

In order to ascertain from the data to what extent the feedback sessions share features of topic choice and management typical of institutional conversations these characteristics will be looked at under the following headings:

- a) subject matter
- b) asymmetry of topic knowledge
- c) asymmetry of topic control

**a) Subject matter**

The subject matter, in all the sessions, is exclusively that of a ‘work-related’ nature; it is concerned with describing and evaluating the lesson, the trainee or teacher’s behaviour in and around the lesson, the behaviour of the students during the lesson, generalising from and making plans of action arising from the event. An examination of the full conversations in Session 1 (*Appendix 1*) and Session A (*Appendix 2*) shows this to be true of both the pre-service and in-service sessions.

In all the 25 sessions recorded the word *lesson* was included in the opening remarks. As noted in *Section 4.4.2: The setting, and orientation of the participants within the feedback session*, there is strong evidence of the participants orienting to ‘the lesson’ as the central topic of the conversation. The pre-service Session 1 and in-service Session A are no exception:

Session 1

TR1 *Cath, having talked to Andrea. You were on first - how do you =*

[

Cath

*Umm*

TR1 *= feel about your lesson?*

Session A

DOS1 *So how did you feel the lesson went?*

Within the central topic of the lesson it is the behaviour of the trainee/teacher which is most commonly discussed. This is clear in these examples:

Session 1 (Line 59)

TR1 *= but I think at this level they need a lot more support =*

[

Cath

*Yeah*

TR1 *= than you gave them. Yeah?*

### Session A (Line 124)

DOS1 *Erm, but erm, you wrote everything up on the blackboard. You gave them the meaning, the form. Erm, do you try to use the students sometimes, to get the form and the meaning out of them?*

Reference to an *individual's* behaviour is often made obliquely, however, especially where criticism is the illocutionary force of the utterance. To take an example from Session 1. When, in Line 35, Polly says:

### Session 1

Polly *Maybe they could have had some more prompts*

She is using politeness strategies to say “You didn’t give them any prompts and you should have done”.

The second most common reference is to the behaviour of the *students*. Often their behaviour is linked to, or follows on from, some action of the trainee or teacher:

### Session 3

Sandra *But when it came to the intensive reading I allowed them ten minutes then I said “You should start talking to your neighbour”.*

TR3 *Uhuh*

Sandra *And they didn’t.*

### Session G

Anna *I mean, you witnessed when someone threw that hole-punch across the room.*

DOS2 *Yes. Fairly alarming but not a regular occurrence.*

Anna *No, sometimes they tend to get - you know - a bit over excited.*

In the following extract there is reference to an event *outside* of the lesson, but is still clearly relevant to the students’ and the teacher’s behaviour *during* the lesson:

### Session C

DOS3 *It was a difficult group to handle, being monolingual, not what you're used to on summer courses. But have you had much feedback from the students themselves on being a monolingual group?*

Judy *Yes, I did actually. Erm I asked them at the end of last week. I asked them to er just just write me a letter anonymously, or sort of personally, er to tell me how they felt about the lessons we'd had so far.*

On rare occasions the behaviour of one of the other participants is mentioned. That of the assessor him or herself (as previously noted on page 93):

### Session 1

TR1 *Funny, it seems to be me talking.*

In giving their opinion on an aspect of the lesson the assessor's own past behaviour or personal experience is sometimes mentioned:

### Session 1

TR1 *I think we've got to say there's a cognitive element in this - but but children - I mean - my daughter's eight and she recognises what's serious and what's humorous .*

### **b) Asymmetry of topic knowledge**

In the pre-service course there is a clear difference of knowledge between the trainers and the trainees about the topic of what constitutes a successful lesson. The trainer is the 'expert' whose authority is undisputed, the trainees are beginners. There is not such a knowledge gap between the DOSs and the teachers as both have experience of teaching and both feel authorised to talk about their experience and give their opinions. Because of the authority vested in the DOSs by virtue of their role as assessor an imbalance is still evident in the talk, though not to the extent as that exhibited between trainers and trainees.

Assessors often exhibit asymmetry of knowledge by asking questions or eliciting information. By asking questions the assessors are interested not so much in the

information, which they already know, but in testing the trainee/teacher's knowledge of, and ability to articulate, this information. The trainer validates the information as well as accepting it by using *OK* and *Yeah* in the following examples. He is telling the trainee that she has given the 'correct' answer:

Session 1 (Line 15)

TR1 *what's the most important thing you've got to think about in terms of deciding whether we are happy with the lesson?*

Cath *Erm the achievement of aims.*

TR1 *OK*

Session 1 (Line 133)

TR1 *How are we going to introduce pace here?*

Andrea *I think contrast very different activities one after another.*

TR1 *Yeah*

This mode of 'testing' questioning or eliciting is very common throughout the pre-service sessions. It is not so common in the in-service sessions where there is not such a difference in the participants' knowledge of the topic. There is an example, however, in Session A (Line 226):

DOS1 *And erm with this one here - erm what was your main aim in using this this newspaper article?*

Sue *Erm to provide them to provide them with an authentic example of how it's really used in English.*

DOS1 *Uhuh*

By saying '*Uhuh*' the DOS is acknowledging that Sue has given a valid or correct answer to her question. However, an indication that this was not a complete answer is given a few turns later at Line 242:

DOS1 *Uhuh and you didn't think of using it erm for some form of skills practice er as well? Maybe giving them erm a few gist questions to read through so that they =*

Sue *Yeah*

[

DOS1 *= so that they actually had some er some understanding of the passage before they went through and underlined the passive?*

### **c) Asymmetry of topic control**

Within both sets of feedback sessions the assessor has control over the topics under discussion.

#### Pre-Service Feedback Session

A closer analysis of Pre-Service Feedback Session 1 illustrates the way the trainer manages to achieve this control. (See *Appendix 1*). There are five identifiable themes discussed during the session: *feelings; aims; level; nomination; pace*.

TR1 starts by introducing the general topic of '*feelings about the lesson*' - asking the trainee, Cath, to say how she feels about the lesson she taught (Lines 1-4).

TR1 *Cath, having talked to Andrea. You were on first - how do you =*

[

Cath

*Umm*

TR1 *= feel about your lesson?*

Cath takes the opportunity to make some self-deprecating remarks to which TR1 responds. He then cuts the discussion short, after Cath has only had a chance to express her feelings about a very small part of the lesson, and introduces a new topic - that of '*aims*' - through the elicitation (Lines 15-19):

TR1 *but what's the most important thing you've got to think about in terms of deciding whether we are happy with the lesson?*

Cath *Erm the achievement of aims.*

TR1 *OK*

Although she comes out with the ‘correct’ answer, from what Cath says next, it is not clear that she understands what TR1 means by *aims*. One of the other trainees, Andrea, however, picks up on the topic with the use of the words *purpose* (Line 25) and *achieved* (Line 32).

TR1 then changes the subject again to that of *level* without making it explicit how *aims* and *level* are linked (Lines 39-40):

TR1 *I think what we've got to think about today is your change from a high level to a low level*

A discussion of the level of the students follows and the resulting support they need (Lines 43 - 76).

At Line 77 there is a pause and TR1 takes control once again by asking: *Anything else?*. After another short pause TR1 is probably about to offer a topic, as indicated by *Right* (Line 80) when Andrea belatedly takes up TR1’s invitation to contribute by offering a new topic, that of *pace*.

TR1 *Anything else?*

(1 sec)

TR1 *Right.*

[

Andrea *That was the main thing that we were discussing just now. Another thing that I thought we should all be doing in this group, perhaps with a warmer, something at the beginning, actually get them moving straight away. It seems to be a bit static.*

TR1 *Mmm, it's good because the other thing that I was worried about really - was the pace.*



By saying “*it's good*” the trainer approves this as a suitable topic, and goes on to indicate that this was an issue he had planned to discuss. In Lines 89 -103 the topic of *pace* is discussed, then TR1 elicits another topic - that of *nomination* in Line 104:

TR1 *Mm what can we do about someone who answers every single general question?*

(laughter)

Andrea *Stop them and nominate the other students.*

TR1 *I think we need a lot more nomination.*

After a discussion of *nomination* during Lines 107 - 129 and a short silence to mark that the topic is exhausted TR1 continues with (Line 131):

TR1 *OK, where were we?*

Andrea *Pace*

TR1 *Pace yes. How are we going to introduce pace here?*

and the topic of *pace* is reintroduced.

From Line 133 to Line 177 the topic of *pace* prevails and again when the topic is exhausted there is a short silence at Line 178. Once again TR1 breaks the silence by returning to the topic of *aims* at Line 179:

TR1 *I think if we're going to think in terms of your achievement of aim ..*

A discussion of suitable aims is continued until the end of the session.

The five themes dealt with during the session are discussed in the following order: *feelings; aims; level; pace; nomination; pace; aims*. The trainer introduced the topics of *feelings, aims, level, and nomination* while that of *pace* was introduced by one of the trainees and quickly taken over by the trainer. It is notable that at no time did any of the trainees introduce a new topic without being invited to do so by the trainer and they did not change from the topic of conversation as they perceived it. After any pause to indicate that a topic was exhausted it was the trainer who took the next turn.

### In-Service Feedback Session

If Session A is taken to exemplify topic nomination in an in-service session it is noticeable that many more topics are dealt with than in the pre-service Session 1. The following introductions can be identified: general feelings about the success of the lesson (Lines 1 - 14); fit of lesson with students' work in other lessons and outside class (Lines 15 - 29); communication and rapport (Lines 30 - 45); students' work in files (Lines 46 - 54); variety (Lines 55 - 69); materials and level (Lines 70 - 105); Guardian article (Lines 107 - 122); form and meaning (Lines 124 - 149); the worksheet (Lines 150 - 210); monitoring (Lines 212 - 225); aims of using the newspaper article (Lines 226 - 275); summary (Lines 276 - 286); comment on the class (Lines 288 -289).

DOS1, in common with the other DOSs, is working more to a set checklist of items included on the feedback form and so is covering a wider range of topics than the trainers in the pre-service sessions. However, there are some recurring themes: *level* is introduced as a topic and is also mentioned in relation to the worksheet; *rapport* is noted again in the discussion about monitoring.

As in the pre-service sessions, the assessor introduces the majority of the topics. However, the teacher manages to introduce a topic unprompted by the DOS (Line 107), and she plays a more active role in developing topic than the trainees do. She even changes the topic somewhat to introduce certain elements, for example at Line 102 when she brings in the point about 'get'.

In this session it is notable that after a topic is exhausted, followed by a short silence, it is the DOS who takes up the conversation again by introducing a new topic. This is exhibited In Lines 123 - 124, and Lines 211 - 212.

Although there are differences between the pre-service and the in-service sessions they both exhibit features characteristic of topic control within institutional talk. As is true of a typical institutional conversation the more powerful person generally *nominates* topic. In all the sessions the trainers/DOSs introduce the topics they want to be discussed. The

assessors' control over topic limits the trainee's/teacher's opportunities to offer elaboration or introduce new topics. This is especially true of the pre-service sessions. As noted in *Section 6.1.2: Turn-taking in the feedback session*, the trainers nominate who is to take the next turn. The assessors also indicate what the trainee/teacher's turn is to be about, as in:

Session 1 (Line 1)

TR1 *How do you feel about your lesson?*

Session 13

TR3 *Tell me first of all about your general feelings about the lesson and then about what you and Vanessa discussed.*

Session H

DOS5 *Erm, OK. I'll tell you what I saw - what I think I saw ..*

Wanda *OK*

DOS5 *.. and then I'd like you to comment on that.*

The criteria for *relevance* is also the assessors' - they decide whether a topic is suitable for inclusion:

Session 1

TR1 *It's good (the fact that Andrea mentioned it was 'static') because the other thing that I was worried about was the pace.*

### **6.3 Conversation management: summary and conclusions**

Both types of feedback session are clearly identified as institutional talk by the way in which the conversation is managed through specific turn-taking procedures and topic nomination. The function of the sessions and the roles of the participants are reflected in the patterns of turn length at different stages in the conversation, and in the turn-taking rights of the speakers.

The topics dealt with in the sessions are exclusively work-related and it has been demonstrated that the participants exhibit an awareness of which topics are appropriate for inclusion in the conversation. There is clearly a difference in the degree of knowledge about teaching methodology, and consequent authority, between the assessors and the trainees/teachers; this asymmetry is reflected in the control and treatment of topic.

Both types of sessions are more typical of an institutional encounter at the informal end of the range. However, differences between the pre-service and in-service sessions have been identified. The one-to-one nature of the meeting, and the smaller ‘knowledge gap’ between participants in the in-service session, result in less asymmetry exhibited in the way the conversation is managed. The in-service session, while still clearly identified as institutional talk, is more informal and more closely approaches ‘everyday conversation’ than the pre-service session. The reasons for this difference will be explored further in *Chapter 11: The feedback session: discourse, role and function*.

After this study of conversation management, another aspect of sequencing and structure within the conversation is focused on in detail in the next chapter (*Chapter 7: Conversational Patterning*). Particular conversational sequences or patterns claimed to be typical of institutional conversations are compared with those found in the feedback sessions.

## CHAPTER 7: CONVERSATIONAL PATTERNING

In addition to evidence of regularities concerning who speaks and on what topic in conversations conducted within the institutional context (see *Chapter 6: Conversation Management*, above), the presence of certain patterns has been identified, in particular those concerned with:

- openings and closings
- formulating and summarising.

After a discussion of findings from the literature I will examine these characteristics as evidenced by the data from the feedback sessions in the study.

### 7.1 Openings and closings

#### 7.1.1 *Openings and closings in institutional talk*

##### **Openings**

According to McCarthy and Carter (1994:63) openings “serve to signal and establish the kind of activity which is about to take place. They represent an orientation ...towards the features of genres that are socially and culturally instituted.” The way in which the conversation opens can say a great deal about the relationship between the participants and the topic of the talk. “Genres thus become quickly established in their opening phases” (McCarthy and Carter 1994:63).

In institutional encounters it is notable that certain participants make the **opening** remarks. Who opens the encounter by nominating the first topic seems to be dependent on the relative power of the participants. The person who controls the encounter at the start of a business meeting, for example, is usually the one chairing the meeting or controlling the proceedings. This is clearly related to what ten Have (1991) terms the ‘asymmetry of initiative’ between professional and lay participants. He points out that the doctor acts as host: invites the patient to sit down, perhaps begins with some small talk. At interviews the interviewer acts in the same way - comments on the weather, asks about the journey, offers coffee.

In a meeting between participants who are oriented to the setting, who know each other, and where no ‘small talk’ is necessary, the reason for the meeting is often the topic of the first turn. Often the structure or planned shape of the meeting, and the content - the agenda - is referred to.

Particular and recurring ways of opening institutional ‘conversations’ have been described. For example, in business meetings a long turn is sometimes elicited at the beginning. Boden (1994:143) has found that “the extended length of opening reports is ... notable”. Ten Have notes a similar pattern in doctor/patient encounters: the doctor invites the patient to speak first, or “provides for a story to be told” (ten Have 1991:144). Coulthard and Ashby also found that doctors usually started the interview by inviting the patient to speak, using expressions “as recommended in clinical textbooks”: “*What’s been the matter?*”, “*What’s your trouble?*” (Coulthard and Ashby 1976:77).

### **Closings**

Because work encounters are more often structurally organised there is a clear end to the meeting after which a different type of talk may continue. Coulthard and Ashby (1976) identify certain ways by which the doctor indicates that the interview is over and that he or she wants to move into what Schegloff and Sacks (1973) call the ‘closing sequence’. In business meetings Boden (1994) notes that the final topic is often concerned with action points to be taken before the next meeting or with plans for the next meeting. Also, participants are often thanked for attending the meeting, or for their contributions to it (Boden 1994).

#### ***7.1.2 Openings and closings in the feedback session***

##### **Openings**

As with many formal work encounters there seem to be conventional ways of starting and finishing a feedback session. Before the ‘business talk’ of the session actually starts the trainer or DOS often act as ‘host’, especially if the meeting is taking place in his or her room or office. As noted in *Section 4.2: The physical context within which the conversations take place*, the room is seen to ‘belong’ to the trainer or DOS and it is they who usually determine where the other participants sit, often by deciding on the

arrangement of the furniture and by inviting the trainers or teacher to take a particular chair.

There is evidence of what ten Have (1991:142) terms the 'asymmetry of initiative' between professional and lay participants. Invariably it is the trainer or DOS who starts the conversation. This is true of all the sessions recorded.

As noted in *Section 6.2.1: Topic choice and management in the feedback session*, in every session recorded the topic of the *lesson* is introduced in the opening utterances, thus establishing at the outset the purpose of the meeting. As in meetings between participants who know each other, where no 'small talk' is necessary, the reason for the meeting - the lesson - is usually the topic of the first turn. Often the structure or planned shape of the meeting, and the content - the agenda - is referred to.

As Boden (1994) found, a long turn is often elicited at the beginning of the encounter: the trainee or teacher is asked to give an account of how, in his or her opinion, the lesson went. The most usual way of starting is by the assessor asking a general question - how the trainee/teacher 'felt' about the lesson.

### Session 1

TR1 *Cath, having talked to Andrea. You were on first - how do you =*

[

Cath

*Umm*

TR1 *= feel about your lesson?*

### Session 3

TR3 *OK. Tell me , tell me first of all about your general feelings about the lesson*

### Session A

DOS1 *So how did you feel the lesson went?*

### Session E

DOS1 *OK, how did you feel that the lesson went?*

### Session B

DOS2 *Would you perhaps like to just er talk me through a little bit*

### Session G

DOS2 *Would you like to say something about the lesson that I came in to see this morning?*

DOS1 starts her two sessions (Sessions A and E), which took place on different days, in almost the identical way. DOS2's openings (Sessions B and G) are also very similar to each other. Certain assessors seem to have routine ways of conducting aspects of their sessions.

Another common way of starting the sessions is to provide some sort of structure for the discussion, or to indicate that there is an 'agenda' to be followed. This is especially true of the in-service sessions, in which the DOSs have a feedback form to complete. The teachers have been given an equivalent self-assessment form to fill in on their own performance. Another document frequently referred to is the lesson plan which was the 'agenda' for the lesson:

### Session F

DOS4 *Er how do you want to go through it? Do you want to go through this thing*  
(referring to the feedback form)

### Session B

DOS2 *Would you like perhaps to talk me through, looking back - you know - with the benefit of hindsight, as well as telling me what your plans and objectives for the lesson were.*



### Session H

DOS5 *Erm, OK. I'll tell you what I saw - what I think I saw=*

Wanda *OK*

DOS5 *=and then I'd like you to comment on that.*

### Session C

DOS3 *I'd like to sort of start talking about the group, and the lesson as a whole, and then we'll kind of go into er more detail.*

In sum: there is strong evidence, in both sets of sessions, for particular and recurring ways of opening, as is characteristic of institutional conversations.

### **Closings**

As with other meetings there are particular ways of ending the formal business of the feedback session, after which a more 'social' conversation may follow.

The most usual way for the in-service sessions to end is by the two participants of the meeting thanking each other for their contributions. All but one of the recorded in-service sessions end with the teacher thanking the DOS. For example:

### Session B

DOS2 *OK, John, thank you very much=*

John *Thank you*

DOS2 *=indeed for letting me come into your lesson. Thanks a lot.*

John *Thank you*

### Session G

DOS2 *... I was happy to have a chance to come into your class. OK.*

Anna *Thank you.*

DOS2 *Thanks very much.*

## Session H

DOS5 *So, thank you for a very nice lesson.*

Wanda *Thank you.*

It is notable that thanking is not common, however, at the end of the pre-service session. The end of Session 1 is marked by the trainer saying: *funny, it seems to be me talking*. After the following laughter they go on to discuss another trainee's lesson.

An examination of the way the encounters end suggest that, in this respect, the in-service session with its 'thanking rituals' is more characteristic of other institutional conversations than of the pre-service session. The following is offered by way of explanation. As the in-service session is a one-to-one meeting one or both participants will leave the room after the session. After the pre-service sessions, however, the group may go on to discuss someone else's lesson or plan the next day's teaching. Also, the in-service observation and feedback session only takes place once or at the most twice during the course - so is more of an occasion, to be marked by a more formal closing ritual. The group on the pre-service course meet every working day throughout the course.

## **7.2 Formulating and Summarising**

A second type of conversational patterning is that of 'formulating' or summarising. Heritage and Watson (1979) use the term 'formulation' to describe a particular type of summing up of what has gone before. Formulations can occur at the end of a stretch of conversation to establish the gist and check the comprehension, perhaps when rounding off a topic, and/or at the end of the whole conversation. They feel that: "Formulations may have a discernible value for single topic-centred or business-at-hand based conversations and their closings" (Heritage and Watson 1979:156).

### **7.2.1 *Formulating and summarising in institutional talk***

Formulations seem to be a particular feature of institutional talk and they are frequently used towards the end of a 'meeting'. As noted by Heritage and Watson: "where it is a

feature of topical talk that the sense of gist achieved has, over its course, been the object of contest or negotiation, the provision of formulations of gist may work to establish the outcomes of such contests and negotiations ‘for another first time’. This use of formulations may be said to be extensively institutionalized in the routine provision for such procedures as ‘summing up’ of meetings and the like” (Heritage and Watson 1979:150).

Confirmation of formulations is the preferred response. If, unusually, the formulation is responded to with a disconfirmation it may “terminate the stream of topical talk and initiate a search for a fresh basis on which concerted comprehension can be established - thereby bringing some stretch of talk back to ‘square one’” (Heritage and Watson 1979:144). It constitutes a breakdown in communication and understanding which cannot be ignored. Sometimes disconfirmation is softened by confirmation immediately followed by disconfirmation, the use of “*Yes, but ...*”.

Heritage and Watson go on to say that the importance of the official summing up role of formulations may be noted “in the institutionalized distribution of rights to formulate” (Heritage and Watson 1979:150) which are usually held by chairpersons, judges and the like - the ‘professional’ and/or the most powerful participant. Fairclough (1989) notes that the more powerful participant often has the ‘last word’ so that speaker’s version of events becomes the ‘official’ one.

### ***7.2.2 Formulating and summarising in the feedback session***

In both sets of sessions, formulation, as described by Heritage and Watson (1979:150), and summary is used by the assessors to paraphrase or interpret points made by the trainees or teachers. In doing so they often establish the ‘official’ or institutional view - a view which may be formalised in writing and kept as a permanent record of the encounter.

#### **Formulating**

In Session 1 there are examples of formulations where the trainer ‘interprets’ comments made by one of the trainees:

Session 1 (Line 14)

Cath *So it livened them up. It got them interested.*

TR1 *It was a lovely introduction to the reading actually*

The trainer summarises 'livened them up' and 'got them interested' with 'lovely introduction'.

Session 1 (Line 84)

Andrea *It seems to be a bit static.*

TR1 *Mmm, it's good because the other thing that I was worried about really - was the pace.*

Here the trainer takes 'a bit static' and introduces the topic of 'lack of pace'.

In Session A there is a fairly lengthy discussion about rapport and communication between the teacher and the students, and between the students in the class:

Session A (Lines 31 - 45)

DOS1 *'communication', 'rapport and so on - how do you think the class works together?*

Sue *I I think they work very well together. I think they they work quite well with me. Erm.*

DOS1 *Yes*

Sue *I I mean they never, I mean, they're never afraid to ask questions if there's, you know, a word they don't know or what - or anything like that.*

DOS1 *Mmhm*

Sue *They never feel they can't ask me, so I think, generally, I have quite good rapport with them.*

DOS1 *Yes no. They work they work well together as well and they worked hard as well during the lesson too.*

Sue *Yes, they did work hard - seeing it was nine o'clock or nine fifteen on a Thursday morning, yeah.*

DOS1 *Yeah they do. There's a nice atmosphere - I've written that down.* (DOS1 refers to her evaluation sheet).

It is notable that the formulation “*There's a nice atmosphere*” is made by the DOS and formally recorded.

### **Summarising**

Many of the sessions, both in-service and pre-service, finish with the assessor making a summarising or ‘rounding off’ comment. For example, there is a summary of the main point(s) made by the assessor in Sessions 2, F and G:

#### Session 2

TR2 *So, OK. Right, so that's the idea of it. So the students need to know your aims as well, definitely. So I think the word for today is aims.*

#### Session F

DOS4 *OK. So my summary, I think, would be - it was a really good lesson, really really fine. Erm the pace, the variety, the rapport, the materials - you know - really good. Erm, erm I would just look at the order of the activities, perhaps. We talked about in the middle, about erm where the where the song should come.*

#### Session G

DOS2 *Right, well, OK. I think - just to sum up - I mean, erm, you know, with listening I think something like a gist task is obviously is obviously er a good idea, by and large, and just checking on information, checking on instructions. Those are two - you know - small things that I'd like to pick up on.*

A general ‘rounding off’ remark, as in Sessions 3 and B, is common:

#### Session 3

TR3 *So those are the main things. Try to relax. They think you're lovely.*

Sandra (laughs)

### Session B

DOS1 *But no they're a nice class, really lovely.*

Sue *I know. I'm very very lucky.*

DOS1 *OK*

It is notable that in all the sessions it is always the assessor and never the person receiving feedback who makes the summarising remarks. In some sessions the assessor refers overtly to the paperwork which the institution requires to be completed: the 'official' record of the session. For example:

### Session F

DOS4 *Well, I'll write this out now in erm in neat.*

Donna *OK*

DOS4 *Then if I give it to you, and you can add any other comments you want to. And we'll sign it.*

In Session 1 the trainer does not neatly summarise the main points of his feedback. He does so to some extent by saying in Lines 250 - 254:

### Session 1

TR1 *Yeah I think the basics are there =*

Cath *Yeah*

[

TR1 *= and I think we did achieve our aims in the sense that many classroom teachers all over the world achieve their aims.*

However, he goes on to qualify these remarks further, and at the end of the session seems to cut himself off in mid-flow - perhaps because the allotted time for the session has passed.

The characteristic occurrence of formulations and summaries again mark the feedback session as being typical of institutional talk. In the sessions, summaries are made, as would be predicted, by the trainer or DOS. It is this person's right as the 'expert' and

most powerful of the participants. It is unusual for the less powerful participant to disagree with a summary made by the more powerful, and there are no instances in the data of a summary being challenged.

This summary becomes the 'official' or 'institutional' one which is written down on the trainee's/teacher's report for the file. On the pre-service course these records will be consulted when a decision is made as to whether the candidate will pass or fail the course. These summaries can be seen as equivalent to the minutes of a meeting, including action points to be completed by the participants, before the next encounter. The records kept are also similar to those kept after an appraisal interview conducted by the employee's line manager.

### **7.3 Conversational patterning: summary and conclusions**

Both sets of feedback session in the data show conversational patterning which is more characteristic of institutional encounters than of social conversations - patterning that could be termed 'routinised'. They have recognisable ways of opening, and the in-service sessions' ending sequences are typical of those found in conversations within the work setting. In all the feedback sessions the presence of summarising and formulating by the more expert assessor typifies the talk as being 'institutional'.

## CHAPTER 8: DISCOURSE ACTS

In *Chapters 5 - 7*, I described how the talk within the feedback sessions is generally structured and organised, how the participants manage the talk, and how certain conversational patterns or ‘routines’ can be identified. In this chapter, I go into the discourse in greater depth by turning to a review of the literature concerned with individual discourse acts within the institutional setting, and to an examination of those discourse acts found in the two sets of feedback session.

A number of studies have undertaken a systematic and detailed examination of particular *discourse acts* and their role within institutional talk. Certain discourse acts and response patterns, as performed by particular participants, have been found by researchers to be characteristic of institutional talk. The link between language and activity can be pursued if we agree that “the details of language use are related to specific activities within an institutional setting” (Drew and Heritage 1992:9).

The terms I shall use to categorise discourse acts are those used by Tsui (1994). The acts are grouped under two headings:

- Initiating acts
- Responses

In Tsui’s taxonomy each of these categories is further sub-divided. For example, Initiating Acts are subdivided into:

### **Initiating Acts**

#### **Elicitations**

- Questions
- Elicitations

#### **Informatives**

- Reports
- Assessments: (criticism; compliments; self-denigration; self-commendation)
- Expressives

#### **Directives**

- Advisives (warnings, advice - advise, suggest, recommend)
- Mandatives (instructions, threats, warnings)

Figure 4



I will not devote an equal amount of time to the examination of every category of *act* listed by Tsui. Rather there will be a focus on those that the literature shows to be present in, and relevant to, talk at work, and those that are present in the feedback sessions. Coulthard and Ashby (1976) claim, for example, that there are three kinds of exchange that are especially appropriate to different stages of a doctor-patient interview: *eliciting*, *directing* and *informing*. These categories accord well with Tsui's *Initiating Acts*. Atkinson (1992) claims that there are three kinds of activity on which research findings from Conversation Analysis are available: *delivering news*, *making an assessment*, *telling a story*. He also makes general statements about the response such activities have been found to prospect: news is usually greeted with "Oh"; assessment by assessment; a story often by another story. Within Tsui's taxonomy *delivering news* and *telling a story* would both be classified as Reports and an *assessment* as an Assessment, and all three come under the heading of Informatives (see Figure 4, above).

So, the initiating acts of **questions** and **elicitations**, and their responses, will be considered in some detail, as will those of **informatives** (especially those of assessments), and **directives**, as they seem to be typical of talk at work.

**Response** will be paid a great deal of attention as it is often the responses that are of most interest if an understanding of the discourse as a whole is to be grasped. Tsui claims that "responses have been given very little attention in the speech act literature" (Tsui 1994:160). However, this claim cannot be made for Conversation Analysis, and especially that concerned with talk at work. Much of the literature in this area is concerned with the response of the less powerful person to the more powerful participant in the institutional setting. It has been common to focus on the adjacency pair as proposed by Schegloff and Sacks (1973). This has been reinforced by the focus of such workers in the field as Pomerantz (1984a) on preferred and dispreferred second turns.

Tsui pleads for greater attention to be paid to the third turn and claims that a three-part exchange is "the basic organizational unit in conversation" (Tsui 1994:43). The three parts of her model consist of an initiation, a response and a follow-up which is optionally

recursive. The third part “lets the addressee know that the speaker has understood the addressee’s response, that he or she has provided an acceptable response, and that the interaction has been felicitous” (Tsui 1994:32). She concedes that two-part exchanges may be applicable to testing and interview situations, but agrees with Mishler (1975) that it is totally inapplicable in “more “open” natural conversation” (Mishler 1975:33). It is interesting to see whether the two-part or the three-part exchange pattern is more usual in the conversations studied. A review of three-part exchanges, as discussed in the literature and evidenced in the feedback sessions, is discussed in *Section 8.2: Response*, which follows a study of individual discourse acts.

## **8.1 Initiating acts**

In many studies of ‘talk at work’ it is notable that certain participants perform the majority of the initiating acts and certain participants respond. As a reflection of the imbalance of power already noted, initiating acts tend to be taken by the ‘professional’. For example, in the medical consultation Coulthard and Ashby found that “the doctor does virtually all the initiating and the patient virtually all the responding. The recurrent types of exchange are doctor-initiated eliciting exchanges rather than patient-initiated informing exchanges” (Coulthard and Ashby 1976:76). They also noted that “if a patient does attempt to initiate the doctor doesn’t feel he has to respond, in fact he usually avoids responding, and attempts to regain the initiative” (Coulthard and Ashby 1976:76).

If we turn to the sub-categories of Initiating Acts these patterns can be exemplified further. Under the general heading of Initiating Acts Tsui (1994) includes the sub-headings:

- Elicitations
- Informatives
- Directives.

### **8.1.1 Elicitations**

Elicitations form the first category of Initiating Acts (see Figure 4, page 124), and are further divided into a) Questions b) Elicitations.

## **a) Questions**

### **b) Questions in institutional talk**

The role of questions - when performing the function of elicitation - has been focused on by a number of studies. Question and answer exchanges are typical of much institutional talk. Erickson and Schultz (1981), in their study of counselling interviews, found that a transition from a more 'conversational' mode into a series of questions and answers marked the beginning of the more 'formal' or 'serious' phase of the interview. The professionals often use questions to "set up speaker and respondent to pursue a quite specific and often loaded local agenda of talk" (Boden and Zimmerman 1991:129).

As has been found typical of all initiating acts, eliciting questions are generally asked by the 'professional'. Frankel (1990) pointed out the dispreference for patient-initiated questions in physician-patient encounters. West (1984) also found strong evidence for the dispreferred status of patient-initiated questions. In a study of doctor/patient exchanges, of the questions asked by patients "46% displayed some form of speech disturbance in the course of their production" (West 1984:88). Patients had "considerable difficulty 'spitting out' their questions" (West 1984:88) whereas "by and large ..physicians' formulations of questions exhibited little evidence of speech disturbances" (West 1984:168).

Extended question and answer sequences have been found to be fairly rare in social conversation - and if they are used people feel as though they are being 'cross-examined'. However, they are found to occur frequently in exchanges between expert and non-expert, professional and lay person, in certain institutional settings such as the classroom (Reynolds 1990), the doctor's surgery (ten Have 1991), the law court (Harris 1989) and the interview (Button 1992). Harris notes that "a sequence of questions by the same speaker is nearly always interpreted as the maintenance of control of the discourse by that speaker" (Harris 1989:142). Ten Have claims that, according to most researchers who have studied doctor-patient interaction in detail, "the doctors' handling of these sequences is their primary instrument of interactional control" (ten Have 1991:145). "Physicians have a privileged access to the first position in such sequences, which gives them control of what can be coherently said in the second position as an

answer and provides them with a possibility to come back after a minimally complete answer with a third position item, or a next question” (ten Have 1991:146). West (1984) claims that the control is reinforced by the restrictive nature of the questions - questions that require a factual answer.

Boden maintains that questions “carry their own interactional and organizational force” (Boden 1994:126). She points out that questions that appear straightforward may be transformed - through chaining - into a powerful device that positions the speaker to pursue a particular topic or tack; for example, a series of questions can build into a critique. West (1984) concurs: she claims that a series of questions demonstrate the asker’s control, and adds that the reason or rationale for the line of questioning may not be given, or the full portent not clear, until the end of the series of questions. In this way West (1984) claims that the asymmetries in the questioning are cumulative so that it is only the doctor’s perspective of the situation based on questioning that counts; the patient’s ‘orientation to the problem’ is not taken into account.

Ten Have disagrees with West in respect to the extent to which questions, as opposed to other forms, are restricting. “West’s analysis, by not differentiating as to the amount of control exercised by questions, runs the risk of overstating the interactional restrictions actually imposed by physicians” (ten Have 1991:148). He feels that the “analytical category of ‘question’ is a difficult one” (ten Have 1991:146) - patients can express doubts, but not in question form. They have “a variety of ways in which they can make known their informational needs” (ten Have 1991:147-8). He adds that not all questions are closed; some are open-ended.

Ten Have also notes that the role of questioning depends on the stage of the interview. The “dispreference for patient-initiated questions is most strongly present in the data-gathering phase at the beginning” (ten Have 1991:148-9) but at other times, especially after diagnosis, patients-initiated questions are more likely and may even be preferred.

### **The question as ‘test’**

A type of question that is common within certain institutional settings, but rare between adults taking part in a social conversation, is the question as test, rather than as a request for information. Button (1992) points out that in a job interview when candidates misunderstand the question they are not corrected as they would be in a ‘normal’ conversation. Instead their ‘misunderstanding’ and ‘wrong’ answer may be held against them. Also, the candidate is not allowed to come back to add to an answer as, after that ‘test’ question, another question may be asked on another topic, according to the checklist or agenda of the questioner. The interviewee has no control over the agenda for most of the interview. Questions have “the ability to push against the flow of another’s talk” (Boden 1994:129), to interrupt a response that seems to be veering at a tangent, and steer the conversation back onto the questioner’s agenda.

In a different institutional setting - the classroom - Mehan (1985) gives further examples of the question as ‘test’. Drew and Heritage (1992) expand Mehan’s findings: “Teachers with certain institutionalized claims to superior knowledge generally ask questions to which they already know the answers to test or extend their students’ knowledge. Their evaluations of students’ answers repeatedly reaffirm both their claim to superior knowledge and their role as testers of students. In conversation, by contrast, where questioners normally seek information which the recipient has to give, no such claim is in point” (Drew and Heritage 1992:41).

Coulthard and Ashby give examples of testing exchanges in the medical interview, where “the high key ‘Yes’ in the follow-up move means ‘I knew you were going to say ‘Yes’ and ‘Yes’ is the right answer”” (Coulthard and Ashby 1976:79).

### **Questions to introduce ‘bad news’**

One function of the question that has been identified as present within certain talk at work is that of introducing ‘bad news’ or an assessment that is unwelcome to the hearer. It is particularly to be found in doctor/patient interviews and in job appraisals. Maynard describes this use of the question in a series of articles (Maynard 1989a; 1989b; 1991; 1992). The doctor, instead of giving his/her opinion in a direct way, aims to elicit from

the receiver of the 'news' a view which he or she can agree with and build on. Doctors often do this by asking questions to elicit the other participant's opinion. "The structural effect is to exhibit various institutional characteristics of the encounter, including a) the participants' orientation to the existence of a ..problem b) the parties' consequent involvement in the lay-professional relationship as a continuing course of action" (Maynard 1991:165).

Maynard (1991) describes what he terms "a perspective-display series" as follows:

- 1 the 'professional' offers a perspective-display invitation by asking a question to elicit the other participant's opinion
- 2 the 'lay-person' replies or gives his/her assessment
- 3 the 'professional' gives his or her report or assessment

The question(s) in Turn 1 can occasion "mentionables" (Schegloff and Sacks 1973) that the professionals can pick up on and take for granted or as 'given' when later presenting their own information or opinion. In this way the lay person's view is 'co-implicated' - in agreeing, with all or part of the view, the professional can give the bad 'news' or unwelcome assessment in "a publicly affirmative and nonconflicting manner" (Maynard 1991:198).

According to Heritage doctors often structure the way they give information so as to make it like ordinary interaction in order "to preserve a visible social solidarity" (Heritage 1984:269). In some ways this use of questioning is different from that described above, in the job interview situation, where judgement from the professional is withheld over many turns in the conversation, or never given at all. In cases in which the professionals are giving 'bad news' they use the other participant's response to feed into their next turn when they give some of the bad news.

## **ii) Questions in the feedback sessions**

In this section the use of questions within the two sets of feedback sessions will be described and analysed in order to assess to what extent this use is typical of institutional talk as described in the previous section.

### **Question to mark the start of the institutional conversation**

A study of the literature has shown that question and answer exchanges characterise much institutional talk. It is therefore significant that such sequences occur in both types of feedback sessions. It has been noted that the transition from a more ‘conversational’ mode into a series of questions and answers often marks the beginning of the more formal or serious phase of the institutional conversation. This is true of the feedback sessions which typically start by the assessor asking a question of the trainee/teacher. For example:

#### Session 1

TR1 - *how do you feel about your lesson?*

#### Session A

DOS1 *So how did you feel the lesson went?*

### **Extended question and answer sequences**

Extended question and answer sequences have also been found to be typical of institutional talk but fairly rare in social conversation. Such sequences occur in both sets of feedback sessions. The power of the assessors is exhibited in the way they take first position in such sequences.

In the pre-service session, Session 1 (see Appendix 1), TR1 asks a number of questions. If we discount rhetorical questions (for example: Lines 131, 218) he asks questions which prospect a response at these points in the conversation: Lines 1-4; 15-17; 34; 91-95; 104-5; 133;142; 145; 193. It is notable that this type of question is to be found more commonly in the first half of the session than in the second half, in which the assessor gives his/her opinion.

In the in-service session, Session A, (see Appendix 2), the DOS asks fewer direct questions, within a longer stretch of discourse: at Lines 1; 31; 55; 70-1; 125-6; 242-8. Again they occur in the first half of the session. Moreover, the questions towards the end of the session (Lines 242-8) are used as a technique to effect criticism or to make suggestions, rather than to elicit information from the teacher. For example:

### Session A

DOS1 *you didn't think of using it erm for some form of skills practice er as well?*  
*Maybe giving them a few gist questions to read through so that they=*

Sue *Yeah*

DOS1 *=so that they actually had some er some understanding of the passage before they went through and underlined the passive?*

In both of the case study sessions the questions are more open-ended at the start of the session and become more specific as the session progresses, and as the assessors attempt to enforce explicitness. Compare, in Session 1: Line 1: *how do you feel ..?* with Line 95: *can you identify why?*. Similarly, in Session A, Line 1: *how did you feel the lesson went?* is more general than, in Line 125: *do you try to use the students sometimes, to get the form and meaning out of them?*

### **Questions that pursue an agenda**

There is evidence that the trainers/DOSs use questions “to pursue a quite specific and often loaded local agenda of talk” (Boden 1994:129). This is exemplified in Session 1 where TR1 asks the question, in Line 104: *what can we do about someone who answers every single general question?*, in order to introduce the topic of ‘nomination’, which he wishes to discuss.

A series of questions may be the trainer/DOS’s way of getting through his or her pre-determined agenda. Many of DOS1’s questions seem predetermined - based on an agenda set by the feedback sheet both participants have prepared in advance. For example she is referring to the feedback sheet when she asks:

### Session A (Line 31)

DOS1 *How do you think the class works together?*

### Line 55

DOS1: *what did you put on the other side?*



Line 70

DOS1 *and the material - you felt it was the right level and so on for them?*

DOS1 uses a series of questions to guide the discussion in the direction she wishes. Often the questions serve not so much to elicit information, but to receive confirmation that the teacher agrees with her assessment.

In the pre-service sessions, in particular, there is evidence that when trainees misunderstand the question they are not immediately corrected as they would in a 'normal' conversation. The trainer often directs the same question to another trainee if the first has not given a satisfactory or complete answer. For example, in Session 1 (Line 23) the trainer, after raising the topic of 'aims', fails to comment on Cath's next contribution. This is probably because Cath misunderstood what was expected and does not respond appropriately. Instead the trainer elicits a response from Andrea who responds appropriately; by discussing *purpose* and what the students *achieved* she is continuing the trainer's chosen topic of 'aims'.

Further evidence points to the way the assessor determines the agenda. Often the trainee is not allowed to come back to add to an answer after a 'test' question; another question may be asked on another topic, according to the checklist or agenda of the assessor. For example, in Session 1, after Line 23 when the trainer elicits Andrea's opinion, Cath never gets an opportunity to come back to the topic of 'aims' before the trainer changes the topic to 'level' at Line 39.

The assessor may interrupt a response that seems to be veering off at a tangent, and steer the conversation back onto the his/her agenda. For example, in Session 1, the trainee, Cath, is invited to assess her own lesson. She chooses to talk about the recording, and says in Line 14:

Cath *So it livened them up. It got them interested.*

The trainer responds by saying, in Line 15:

TR1 *It was a lovely introduction to the reading actually, a nice idea.*

However, he then goes on immediately to an item on *his* agenda - that of 'aims'. Rather than let the trainee continue to give her feelings about the lesson he asks:

TR1 *but what's the most important thing you've got to think about in terms of deciding whether we are happy with the lesson?*

Individual questions can be linked by the speaker in order to pursue a particular topic, or to effect a critique. The rationale for the line of questioning is often not clear until the end of the series of questions. For example, in Session 1 the series of questions and comments that start at Line 15 can be seen to culminate at Lines 59-62.

TR1: *but I think at this level they need a lot more support than you gave them. Yeah?*

In sum, because the assessors take the initiating turns they have control of what is 'acceptable' in terms of response if the discourse is to remain coherent. It also provides them with a possibility to come back after a minimally complete answer with a third position item, or a next question. This pattern is typical when the assessor uses the 'test' question, which I shall now discuss.

### **Questions as test**

As noted earlier (page 129) a type of question that is common within certain institutional settings, but rare between adults taking part in a social conversation, is the question as 'test', rather than as a request for information. The trainers in the pre-service feedback sessions have certain institutionalized claims to superior knowledge so can ask questions to which they already know the answers, to test or extend the trainees' knowledge. For example:

#### Session 1 (Line 15)

TR1 *what's the most important thing you've got to think about in terms of deciding whether we are happy with the lesson?*

#### And in Line 104:

TR1 *Mmm, what can we do about someone who answers every single general question?*

Examples are to be found in other pre-service sessions, for example in Session 2:

Session 2

TR2 *The language they were concentrating on was?*

Fran (silence - looking down)

TR2 *Prediction - may, will, might. Right?*

Here, when the trainee fails to supply the ‘correct’ answer, the trainer gives the answer herself. Later the correct answer to another of the trainer’s questions is supplied, not by the trainee who taught the lesson, but by one of the other trainees:

Session 2

TR2 *I was worried at the language that they were coming out with and I’ve written down a few of them - did anyone notice?*

Fran (silence - looking unhappy)

James *They were tending to use the ordinary present tense.*

TR2 *Yes.*

The trainer’s follow-up move -*Yes* - indicates that James has given the ‘correct’ answer. Such evaluations of trainees’/teachers’ answers reaffirm both the trainers’ claim to superior knowledge and their role as testers of the trainees.

By contrast, in the in-service sessions the ‘test’ question is rare. There are no examples in Session A. This is one of the differences between the two sets of sessions. Reasons for this difference are suggested in *Chapter 11: The feedback session: discourse, role and function*.

**Introducing ‘bad news’**

One function of the question that can be identified as present within certain institutional talk is that of introducing ‘bad news’ or an assessment that is unwelcome to the hearer (see also *Section 8.1.2: Informatives - Criticism*, page 142 ). In the feedback session the assessors, instead of giving their opinion in a direct way, sometimes aim to elicit from the receiver of the ‘news’ a view which they can agree with and build on. They do this by

asking questions which can elicit “mentionables” (Schegloff and Sacks 1973) that they can pick up on and take for granted or as ‘given’ when later presenting their own information or opinion. In this way the trainee/teacher’s view is “co-implicated” (Maynard 1991:168) and the assessor can give an unwelcome assessment in a non-conflicting way.

An example of this is found in Session 1, Lines 104-114. By asking the question:

TR1 *what can we do about someone who answers every single question?*

the trainer elicits the “mentionable” *nominate/nomination*. He agrees:

TR1 *I think we need a lot more nomination*

and he can then go on to give the ‘bad news’:

TR1 *You’ve got to know their names better .... at the moment you’ve got one person who answers every single question.*

In Session A, by asking the question, in Line 125:

DOS1 *do you try to use the students sometimes, to get the form and meaning out of them?*

the DOS elicits *grammatical things* from the teacher. This enables the DOS (Lines 134-148) to suggest that the teacher did not focus enough on the grammatical structure of the language and that she needed to *involve them a bit more in the actual rules*. She obtains the teacher’s verbal agreement to this negative assessment, in Line 149:

Sue *Yeah, yeah. Well, I’ll do that again another (time?)*

Whether she means this, or whether she is pandering to the DOS for whatever reason is, however, difficult to tell.

### **Trainees’/teachers’ questions**

Trainers and DOSs use questions to direct the conversation. By contrast those receiving feedback answer questions posed, and ask far fewer questions themselves. This is particularly true in the pre-service sessions. The trainee, Cath, whose lesson is being discussed in Session 1, asks only three questions. None of her questions elicit information; rather she is using them to seek confirmation and reassurance from the trainer:

Line 9

Cath *Did you like it?*

Line 63

Cath *So something written down, like prompts?*

Line 276

Cath *because it personalises it, doesn't it?*

As I hope to have demonstrated, trainers/DOSs ask trainees/trainers to account for their behaviour. By contrast, the questions posed by trainees and teachers do not ask the trainers or DOSs to account for themselves. The only questions in Session 1 from a trainee (not the trainee whose lesson is being discussed) which could be considered 'challenging' are, in Line 271:

Lara *Would you put a bit more in because of their age? If they were elementary would you look at the style of the text?*

And later, in Line 277:

Lara *But if they were really young?*

## **b) Elicitations**

### **i) Elicitations in institutional talk**

Rather confusingly, the label *Elicitations* is also given to a sub-division of Tsui's (1994) category *Elicitations*. Within the sub-division, *Elicitations* are contrasted with *Questions*. However, as noted by ten Have, it is not always easy to make a functional distinction between the two structures; participants in institutional conversations have "a variety of ways in which they can make known their informational needs" (ten Have 1991:146).

As Bergmann (1992) points out in his study of psychiatric consultations, many professionals do not formulate direct questions but use eliciting techniques: "a range of techniques can be found which a speaker may use for making his restricted access to the

events or circumstances he is focusing on” (Bergmann 1992:142). These elicitations are categorised by Tsui (1994) as being very similar, in function if not in form, with the types of questions described in the section above. Such elicitation has also been referred to as ‘fishing’ (Bergmann 1992).

Bergmann finds that the exploring utterance in psychiatric interviews is usually treated by the recipient in one of two very different ways, depending on how they view the activity. It may be seen as “a considerate, affiliative invitation to the recipient openly to formulate private problems, to disclose personal feelings and to talk about their troubles” (Bergmann 1992:155). This way of prompting “implicitly assures them that whatever they are going to disclose will find understanding and affirmation” (Bergmann 1992:155). On the other hand the elicitation may be seen as “an insidious strategy to make the recipient disclose experiences, feelings or information which the patient might have preferred to keep to himself” (Bergmann 1992:156).

Bergmann describes various ways in which the professionals can elicit information or reaction from the lay person:

1. by telling their version of a situation to prompt. For example: “*I was a bit puzzled when you ...*”;
2. by referring to a third party: “*x told me*” ; “*I heard that you ...*”;
3. by “pointing out the uncertain character” of the ‘professional’ knowledge, by using negative politeness to save face such as “*I mean, I thought the situation was just a bit uncomfortable*”;
4. by using understatement - Bergmann gives the example of ‘*not completely dressed*’ to elicit ‘*naked*’ from the patient. Understatement works on the basis of shared knowledge; it assumes some awareness on the part of the lay person - it is no use ‘fishing’ for what is not there.

In all these ways the recipient is invited and given the opportunity to go first in “properly denominating the referred-to object” (Bergmann 1992:150) - to introduce the ‘mentionable’ referred to above in the section on questions (pages 130,136). “Once the

object is named by the recipient the speaker can take over” (Bergmann 1992:150). In this way the questioning and the eliciting technique can have the same function.

When eliciting techniques are used within the institutional setting there is evidence that they are accomplished through face-saving devices such as mitigators and euphemistic descriptors - negative politeness strategies, so that the language is never ‘bald-on-record’. Bergmann describes mitigators as “descriptive elements which generally weaken a claim or diminish the directness or roughness of an assertion” (Bergmann 1992:151). Examples include ‘*a bit*’, ‘*kind of*’. He feels that “these mitigators operate in a defensive way, thereby trying to head off a possibly upcoming disagreement by the co-interactant” (Bergmann 1992:152).

## **ii) Elicitations in the feedback session**

Elicitations are used by the assessors, and especially by the DOSs in the study. As with questioning, there is evidence that the assessors use elicitations to get the receiver of feedback to first voice ‘mentionables’ that can then be taken up for further discussion. This is a particularly useful technique to use where negative evaluation is to be expressed; once the short-coming is admitted and established it is out in the open and can be discussed - with causes and remedies suggested.

The assessors can use their prior knowledge of the trainee/teacher, their knowledge of the lesson taught, and their general expertise in the area to elicit the view of the person(s) receiving feedback. Assessors often claim that this technique is used to raise the awareness of those receiving feedback - that any criticism is better coming from the trainee/teacher than directly from the assessor. By skilful use of elicitation the trainee or teacher may even be encouraged to give the evaluation themselves that the givers of feedback feel bound to give. If the trainees/teachers are encouraged to be self-critical, they can be given credit for ‘self-awareness’, and the trainer/DOS is spared from making a direct criticism. (Criticism and self-denigration is discussed in more detail in *Section 8.1.2(b)*).

### **Marked and unmarked elicitation**

Elicitations can be what Bergmann (1992) refers to as ‘unmarked’ - general, or ‘marked’ - more specific. In Session 1 the trainer manages to elicit from the trainee the admission that she did not exploit the humour of the text she was using. He starts with an unmarked general elicitation:

#### Session 1 (Line 197)

TR1 *Think of your first activity in terms of political and things like that.*

Cath *Yeah, it was quite sensational, shocking.*

He follows up her suggestion by adding some of his own:

TR1 *Sensational, shocking. Amusing? Humorous?*

Cath *Yeah.*

He then moves from elicitation to make a statement and then ask a more direct question:

TR1 *It's got quite a humorous style actually - it's supposed to be anyway.*

Cath *Yeah.*

TR1 *Erm, to what extent do you think you really got that out of the text?*

Cath *I don't think I did very well, no.*

An example of a more marked, or direct, elicitation can be found in Session A, Line 70.

DOS *And the material - you felt that it was the right level and so on for them.*

Which elicits the admission:

Sue *Yeah, I mean er this was maybe the, you know, the gap-fill was maybe slightly below their level*

In Session 3 the trainee understands that TR3's question is not a request for information but a marked elicitation of negative self-evaluation.

#### Session 3

TR3 *What vocabulary were you planning to teach at that stage?*



Sandra (smiles) *Perhaps I should have taught a little more at that stage.*

TR3 *Right.*

### **Methods of elicitation**

Some of the ways in which ‘professionals’ elicit a negative evaluation from the ‘lay person’, as described by Bergmann (1992), are exemplified in the feedback sessions:

1. by telling their version of a situation to prompt. For example:

#### Session 1 (Line 145)

TR1 *You had erm a jumbled er you were going to jumble it. We talked about it before. You changed your mind on that.*

Bergmann’s second way - referring to a third party: “*x told me*”; “*I heard that you ...*” - is not used by assessors as they witnessed the lesson at first hand.

3. by “pointing out the uncertain character” of the ‘professional’ knowledge, by using negative politeness. For example:

#### Session A (Line 134)

DOS1 *Yes, I mean, I think with this one, erm I just wondered whether you could have maybe put the erm passive ...*

*I mean, I think, just, wondered, could, maybe*, and the hesitation devices, all serve to soften the implied criticism and to make it easier for the receiver to agree (rather reluctantly) that improvement is needed, in Line 149.

Sue *Yeah yeah. Well, I’ll do that again another (time)*

(For more detailed discussion of the use of politeness strategies in the feedback session see *Section 9.1.2.*)

4. by using understatement. There is a good example in Session G:

#### Session G

DOS2 *There are one or two students who tend - you know - who pose problems occasionally and - you know - you have to you have to exercise a certain degree of control over them.*

Anna *Yes. I mean, you witnessed when someone threw that holepunch across the room.*

DOS2 *Yes. Fairly alarming ...*

Anna *No, sometimes they tend to get - you know - a bit over excited.*

The DOS introduces the topic of unruly students in an understated manner. This elicits the example from Anna which give the trainer the opportunity of being more explicit in his evaluation by using the word *alarming*.

In sum, there are many instances to be found in the data of the type of elicitation which is characteristically used by ‘experts’ within institutional encounters.

### **8.1.2 *Informatives***

*Informatives* are classified in Tsui’s taxonomy as Initiating Acts (see Figure 4, page 124), and are the second category, after *Elicitations*, to be examined. Informatives make up a discourse category which “not only provides information but also reports events and states of affairs, conveys evaluation judgements and expresses feelings and attitudes” (Tsui 1994:154). Tsui divides Informatives into:

- Reports
- Assessments
- Expressives

Expressives are “easily identifiable because they are often realised by formulaic expressions and the forms of the responses predicted are highly predictable” (Tsui 1994:152). They include expressions of welcoming, congratulating, thanking, apologising, greeting, and leave-taking. Expressives are not dealt with in detail in this study as they have not been found to be of particular interest by researchers into discourse in the work place.

Reports and Assessments, on the other hand, have received a great deal of attention. It is not so easy to distinguish between reports and assessments: what might seem to be a ‘neutral’ informative, or report, at sentence level may be evaluative at discourse level. The speaker does this by focusing on a particular topic, and linking the sentence with

others to make up a changing picture that may not be complete until the conversation is over. In the following sections I look at reports and assessments separately. For each I review the literature and then go on to describe and analyse the occurrence of such discourse acts in the feedback sessions.

## **a) Reports**

### **i) Reports in institutional talk**

According to Tsui a report “gives an account of certain events, states of affairs or personal experience” (Tsui 1994:138). She asserts that it differs from an assessment in that “its primary illocutionary intent is not to assert an evaluative judgement” (Tsui 1994:138). However, it is difficult to judge the intent of isolated utterances; the discourse, the context and co-text, or what Sacks, Schegloff et al. (1974) call the ‘conversational location’ (both in terms of turn-by-turn organisation and conversational location), are crucial in determining the receiver’s understanding of the intention of the speaker.

In some instances whether an informative is a report or an assessment is not important. For example, Heath (1992) uses the term *informing* to describe statements that can both report and assess. He describes how informings are used by doctors to deliver diagnoses in the general practice consultation.

Unlike questions or elicitations, reports are made by both the expert and the less or non-expert person within the institutional interaction. The likelihood of one person giving information can depend on the stage of the conversation. Boden (1994) notes that reports are often given at the start of a meeting - followed by a period of questioning. Ten Have (1991) claims that often the patient is asked to provide a report at the start of a consultation while the doctor is more likely to give information towards the end of the session.

### **Response to reports**

In an early study on response Goffman (1971) focused on how the receipt of information is expressed. One of the most common ways, especially in a one-to-one situation, is the

use of “*Oh*” to show that a change of state of knowledge has occurred. Atkinson (1992) claims that ‘news’ is typically greeted by “*Oh*”: ““*Oh*” is used normally when the hearer is told something s/he did not previously know, when the information contradicts the hearer’s expectations, or at the point when the hearer understands a point” (Atkinson 1992). Heritage (1984) finds that what he terms ‘Oh receipt tokens’ often overlap with the previous turn or are delivered with very little delay. On the other hand, the ‘Oh-receipt’ may be avoided by questioners to propose that they have not been informed.

Although many responses within the work setting follow patterns found in social conversations a number of studies have found that response to information within the institutional setting can be significantly different.

Greatbach (1992), in his study of news interviews, notes that there seems to be a constraint on the professional to withhold expressions of surprise, sympathy or even agreement. Ten Have notes that research suggests that “professionals use ‘third turns’ in quite specific ways .. they tend to refrain from commentary, displaying alignment or any indication of their own information processing” (ten Have 1991:150).

Atkinson (1982) claims that a variety of routine utterances such as second assessments, second stories and ‘newsmarks’ are generally absent in professionals’ contributions.

Heritage notes that medical consultations, news interviews, courtroom examinations, and classroom interactions are all “marked by the absence of “*oh*” as a routine third-turn receipt object” (Heritage 1984:336) and claims that the absence of ‘*Oh*’ as a ‘change of state marker’ is ‘formal’ or ‘institutional’. He goes on to claim that this absence is “characteristic of the management of particular kinds of institutionalized interaction” (Heritage 1984:336). Boden (1994) also notes the absence of the ‘*Oh*’ receipt token in more formal institutional meetings.

Heath (1992) agrees, claiming that informatives from ‘professionals’, followed by silence or minimum acknowledgement on the part of the ‘lay persons’ is a common pattern to be found in certain institutional settings. He compares these types of conversation with

social conversations: in the institutional setting “responses to informings which arise in conversational interaction appear to be used relatively rarely” (Heath 1992:241). He goes on to say that the doctor’s diagnosis, especially if given in statement form, may receive an acknowledgement but is usually greeted by silence. This is clearly in marked contrast to the exchanges described by Maynard (1992) in which questions and other forms of elicitations are used. Heath comments that “this relative absence of recipient participation with informings is also found in other interaction environments in which an expert provides an assessment or opinion on matters of which the other person is ignorant” (Heath 1992:245). He explains this imbalance of participation: by withholding response the lay person preserves “the objective, scientific, and professional status of the assessment” (Heath 1992:262). He goes on to say that “there is a concern to avoid any response which could serve to imply that the participant’s versions and assessment had an equivalent status” (Heath 1992:262).

However, there may be a completely different reason for the absence of “*Oh*” from the ‘expert’ when receiving information from the ‘inexpert’. The lack of expected response can stem from the fact that the information received is not ‘news’ but expected. An acknowledgement - “*Uhuh*” - is therefore more likely.

## **ii) Reports in the feedback session**

So, unlike questions or elicitations, reports are made by both the expert and the less or non-expert person within the institutional interaction. The likelihood of one person giving information can depend on the stage of the conversation. This finding holds true for the feedback session. As already noted (page 92), reports are often invited from the trainees/teachers *at the beginning* of the session. The assessors give information and/or assessments *at the end* of the session. Session 1 is typical: the trainer invites the trainee to give a report on the lesson.

### **Session 1 (Line 1)**

TR1 *Cath, having talked to Andrea. You were on first - how do you =*

[

Cath

*Umm*

TR1 *= feel about your lesson?*

This she does up to Line 14, when her report is interrupted by a question from the trainer.

In Session A the teacher is also invited to give a report (in Line 1), which she does (with some interruptions) until Line 29.

Although reports are given in both sets of feedback they differ from those found in more formal encounters within the institution context. Within a formal business meeting, for example, reports are usually given with few interruptions; discussion follows the reporting stage. The feedback sessions are more similar to doctor/patient encounters in which the patient is asked to give a report but the doctor often provides prompts, asks questions, or makes comments throughout the presentation of the report. This pattern is clearly seen in both examples of feedback session (see Appendices 1 and 2).

#### Response to reports in the feedback session

As noted in the literature, response to information within the institutional setting follows different patterns from those expected within social conversations. Both sets of feedback sessions, as in medical consultations, news interviews, courtroom examinations, and classroom interactions, are notable for the absence of “*oh*” as a routine third-turn.

In the pre-service sessions the trainees never use *oh* to mark the receipt of information. This accords with Heath’s (1992) claim that informatives from ‘professionals’, followed by silence or minimum acknowledgement on the part of the ‘lay persons’, is a common pattern to be found in institutional settings and marks the formality of the setting. The absence of “*Oh*” from the assessor when receiving information from the trainees/teachers can stem from the fact that the information received is not ‘news’ but expected. An acknowledgement - “*Uhuh*” - is therefore more usually found.

There is only one occurrence of *oh* in the pre-service sessions. Here it is the trainer that registers the unexpected ‘news’ that the trainee thought the recording not clear enough. He uses the *oh* before disagreeing with her assessment.

Session 1 (Line 5)

Cath *There were lots of bits and pieces which weren't quite right - er, you know, like the recording at the beginning wasn't clear enough er*

[

TR1

*Oh I rather liked it.*

In the in-service sessions the occurrence of *oh* is not so rare, but still unusual: three instances in a total of nine sessions, two by teachers, one by a DOS. In this example the teacher is told about something that happened in her class of which she was not previously aware.

Session I

DOS6 *Yeah, mmm the little boy that I was sitting next to - cos they were all asking you "How do you spell it?" I actually put the verbs down at the bottom of the page.*

Cath *Oh, right*

In this next example, the DOS is given an interesting piece of information by the teacher, which is genuinely new to her.

Session C

DOS3 *Mmm - great Japanese pronunciation.*

Judy (laughs) *Ah, thank you. It was taught to me by the students .*

DOS3 *Oh, right.*

In the following example the teacher suddenly realises what the DOS is referring to, and marks that realisation with *Oh*.

Session B

DOS2 I love all the sort of mind er=

[

John

Oh right - the profiles.

[

DOS2

=biographies, profiles you know.

In sum, the lack of *oh*-receipt characterises the feedback session as being typically institutional. The less formal nature of the in-service session is reflected in the slightly more frequent occurrence of *oh* compared with the pre-service sessions.

## **b) Assessments**

Assessments form the second of the categories, after Reports, under the heading of Informatives (see Figure 4, page 124). Several types of assessments have been identified, and these will be focused on in turn, together with their responses:

- Criticism
- Compliment
- Self-denigration (or self-criticism)
- Self-commendation

Firstly, however, there follows a review of the literature concerning Assessments in general and their responses, and their function in ‘talk at work’.

### **i) Assessments in institutional talk**

According to Tsui “assessments are a sub-class of informatives in which the speaker asserts his judgement or evaluation of certain people, objects, events, state of affairs, and so on” (Tsui 1994:142). Assessments are of particular interest in research on talk at work as certain encounters have the evaluation of people’s behaviour and/or specific events as their main purpose: for example, job appraisals, project review meetings, debriefing meetings. The lesson feedback session would also seem to qualify as a good example. However, there has been less published on the way assessments are voiced in the work place as opposed to in ordinary conversation. This is in marked contrast with the wealth of research into the way questions are asked and answered.

Goodwin and Goodwin (1992:181) describe how assessments can be achieved in a variety of ways: through the use of a single word, to an activity that extends over a number of turns. An assessment can be accomplished through a word - typically an adjective or adverb - *an assessment segment*. Or non-verbal means can be used: intonation or gesture, for example a head shake. This they term *an assessment signal*.



Assessment can also be effected by means of a particular type of speech act - *an assessment action*. Finally, when organised as an interactive activity which includes more than one speaker and “encompasses types of action that are not in themselves assessment” assessment can take place within *an assessment activity* (Goodwin and Goodwin 1992:154-5).

Goodwin and Goodwin (1992:156) assert that during the *assessment activity* the participants both produce assessment actions of their own and attend to the “assessment-relevant actions” of the other participant(s). As the conversation progresses the participants modify their own behaviour in relation to what they observe others are doing and saying, and the way they perceive the development of the assessment activity.

Clearly assessment can be the main function of certain types of exchange within the institutional setting and are recognised as such; the job appraisal and the teacher training feedback session are prime examples of situations where the full range of ways of conveying assessment is expected. Again, as an assessment is an initiating act, it is one that the literature would suggest is made by the ‘expert’ rather than the ‘non-expert’ in these encounters.

The different types of assessments and their ‘preferred’ responses are detailed by Pomerantz (1984a). She is concerned with the language of assessment in ‘everyday’ conversations and states that “when persons partake in social activities they routinely make assessments” (Pomerantz 1984a:57). However, her discussion on assessments which occur “within speakers’ reports of their partaking in activities” (Pomerantz 1984a:58) is relevant to talk at work. She points out that in these conversations knowledge is given and shared.

In particular in ‘agreeing and disagreeing with assessments’ she focuses on responses by one of the participants to the first speaker’s initial assessment. She distinguishes between the different types of assessment: “in proffering an initial assessment, a speaker formulates the assessment so as to accomplish an action or multiple actions, for example, praise, complain, compliment, insult, brag, self-deprecate. In the next turn to the initial

proffering, certain actions are ‘preferred’ and certain are ‘dispreferred’ (Pomerantz 1984a:58). Tsui (1994) agrees when she points out that responses to assessments are constrained by social considerations such as modesty, politeness and preservation of face; different types of assessments prospect different responses.

Tsui maintains that the illocutionary intent of an assessment “is to get the addressee to agree with the speaker’s judgement or evaluation” (Tsui 1994:183) and that the typical response is one in which a second judgement or evaluation, or what Pomerantz (1984a) calls a ‘second assessment’, is made. Pomerantz agrees that in normal social encounters **agreement** with assessments is preferred: “conversants orient to agreeing with one another as comfortable, supportive, reinforcing” (Pomerantz 1984a:77). Pomerantz, when discussing ‘everyday conversation’ claims that **disagreement** with an assessment is generally felt to be “uncomfortable, unpleasant, difficult - risking threat, insult or offense” (Pomerantz 1984a:77), or ‘face-threatening’ (Brown and Levinson 1987).

However, as already noted, Pomerantz’s findings relate to everyday conversation. It may be that different patterns of response are to be found in institutional talk, and that second assessment/agreement is not always to be expected. For example, Frankel (1984) found that second assessments were almost never used by physicians but acknowledgements such as *Uhuh*, *OK*, *I see* were very frequent. The function of such a response is particular to the context: “acknowledgements are used primarily to accomplish sequential as opposed to interpretative operations in discourse” (Frankel 1984:157). Such responses “operate without any obvious intrusion on the style or content of what follows .. their major effect is to invite speaker continuation” (Frankel 1984:158).

Agreement .(preferred in social conversations) can be expressed in a number of ways:

- by ‘upgrading’ the initial assessment;
- by giving the same assessment - with an indication of “*I thought so too*”;
- by ‘downgrading’ - weakening the agreement, either prefacing a disagreement or by being ‘grudging’ in agreement. If very much downgraded such ‘agreement’ becomes disagreement (see below).

Agreements typically occupy the whole turn, are stated unambiguously and are voiced after a minimum delay or even with an overlap.

If disagreement is expressed, however, it usually contains features that signal that the disagreement is dispreferred.

- It is often prefaced by such ‘hedges’ such as “*Well*”. Heath (1992) notes that doctors often preface disagreements of opinion with “*Actually*” or “*In fact*”, hedges used to effect ‘negative politeness’ (Brown and Levinson 1987).
- Disagreement is stated after partial agreement or is mitigated in ways that weaken the disagreement - by means of partial agreements, qualifications, additions, or exceptions such as “*Yes, but ...*” “*I know but*”. So, where both agreement and disagreement components are present in the ‘agreement plus disagreement’ pattern the response is one of disagreeing rather than agreeing.

Disagreement can be delayed within a turn or series of turns; as Sacks points out - the disagreement is “pushed rather deep in to the turn” (Sacks 1987:58). The delay may be such that it is recognised by the speaker as indicating disagreement, who may then retract, justify or modify what s/he has just said. Disagreement can also be expressed through silence (Phillips 1994) which by its ambiguity (Jensen 1973) is less threatening than voiced disagreement or by a request for clarification or more information. The absence of agreement, qualified agreement, and requests for clarification are “interpretable as instances of unstated, or as yet unstated, disagreements” (Pomerantz 1984a:65).

When disagreeing with an assessment, where agreement is preferred, Pomerantz (1984b) claims that there are two types of evidence that people give to support their position:

- telling what they know to be true from their personal experience;
- reporting someone else’s version.

Reporting their ‘limited’ experience or ‘merely’ reporting other sources are both ways of mitigating sensitive actions. She claims that though telling of their own experience may be from a position of confidence it is more likely to be a ‘backing off’ technique: by

denigrating the worth of their own 'narrow' experience. However, Pomerantz goes on to say that "while mitigating challenges are at times a consequence of the speaker's uncertainty, at other times they are a consequence of the speaker's perceptions of their rights to disagree" (Pomerantz 1984b:612). This type of behaviour would, therefore, be expected in the institutional setting where there is an imbalance of power between the participants. Pomerantz makes this point: "when interacting with high status people, low status and marginal status people may find themselves mitigating their challenges and disagreements" (Pomerantz 1984b:612).

The person with less power may feel that they have no right to express disagreement in any form. Heath illustrates this point in his study of doctor-patient talk when he says that expertise ensures lack of conflict and that "disagreement with the doctor or altercation between the participants is extremely rare" (Heath 1992:258) although sometimes "information is exchanged in circumstances in which patient and doctor have differing and incongruent conceptions" (Heath 1992:261).

Goodwin and Goodwin (1992) describe the nature of the understanding and response to assessments that take place over an 'assessment activity': "the production of an assessment can constitute a social activity involving the collaborative action of multiple participants" and shows that the listener is following and even anticipating the assessment (Goodwin and Goodwin 1992:163). They note that this can cause errors of response: the recipient of the assessment can predict wrongly what the speaker is leading up to. Consequently, the way the conversation develops can, for example, make it more difficult for one of the participants to disagree at the conclusion of the assessment when the interim responses that he or she has given have been ones of agreement. In institutional settings where the 'professional' may take long and multiple turns to give an assessment the less powerful person may be 'trapped' into agreement.

## **ii) Assessments in the feedback session**

An analysis of the data will not only tell us how much of the discourse in the feedback sessions can be categorised as assessment, but also the relative importance of different

types of assessment - whether negative or positive, whether made by the assessors or by the trainees and teachers.

The full range of means of conveying assessment as described by Goodwin and Goodwin (1992:154-6) is present in the feedback session. This is to be expected as evaluation of the lesson by all participants, but primarily by the trainer/DOS, is recognised as the primary reason for the meeting, as noted in *Section 4.4.2: The setting, and orientation of the participants within the feedback session*. It could be argued that the entire conversation constitutes what Goodwin and Goodwin (1992:155) describe as an 'assessment activity'. There is evidence that, during the feedback sessions, the participants both produce assessment actions of their own and respond to the actions of the other participant(s). As the conversation progresses the participants modify their own behaviour in terms of what they observe others are doing and saying, and the way they perceive the development of the assessment activity.

An assessment is an Initiating Act, and therefore one that the literature suggests is made by the 'expert' rather than the 'non-expert'. This expectation is borne out by a study of the data. The majority of assessments in the sessions are made by the assessors. However, the trainees and teachers are encouraged to offer evaluative comments about themselves and one another. In the pre-service session they usually only comment when invited to do so by the trainer, especially if the assessment is of another trainee's behaviour. For example:

#### Session 1

TR1 *Polly, what did you think about it?*

#### Session 2

TR2 *Ruth, what did you think of Fran's lesson?*

#### Session 4

TR4 *OK Frank. What were you looking at?*

Unsolicited self-assessment is much more common in the in-service than in the pre-service session. Reasons for this will be explored further in *Chapter 11: The feedback session: discourse, role and function*.

After having briefly reviewed assessment in general, as evidenced in the literature concerning institutional talk and as typified in the feedback sessions, I now turn to focusing on the different types of assessment.

### **iii) Types of Assessment**

As noted above (see Figure 4, page 124), *Assessments* can be categorised under four headings:

- criticism
- compliments
- self-denigration
- self-commendation.

### **Criticism in institutional talk**

Pomerantz notes that “a class of talk routinely reported as withheld ... is co-participant criticism” (Pomerantz 1984a:79) and she goes on to say that criticisms “are a class of actions that often are performed in dispreferred-action turn/sequence shapes” (Pomerantz 1984a:78). Tsui adds “a criticism is a face-threatening act which is usually avoided unless the interlocutors know each other very well” (Tsui 1994:147). For this reason a criticism, especially within the institutional setting, is often presented as a report. As Drew points out in a discussion concerning the giving of ‘reports’: by giving an account of an event without explicitly stating the implication of the account “speakers withhold officially taking positions about the possible implications of their reporting” (Drew 1984:137).

Although not common in everyday conversation between peers, there are certain work or institutional settings where criticism of one of the participant’s behaviour is to be expected. The situation legitimises the ‘assessor’ to make such criticisms. A small number of studies of criticism within the work context have been made.

In a study of the giving and receiving of negative criticism in a teacher training context, utilising the politeness model put forward by Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987), I found the following (Phillips 1993). Even when endowed with the authority to criticise, by virtue of his or her role, the trainer recognises the action to be face-threatening and employs a number of techniques to mitigate the threat. There was overwhelming evidence from the data to suggest that the trainers were unambiguous in their criticism. However, the criticism, although unambiguous, was not ‘bald-on-record’ but tempered by use of a range of politeness strategies. The choice of politeness strategy reflected the weight of the criticism. As noted by Brown and Levinson (1978), ‘positive’ politeness is more often used to redress criticism of less serious misdemeanours, while ‘negative’ politeness is brought to bear in the criticism of more serious matters. When making a ‘small’ criticism the speaker tends to use language that stresses in-group membership and social similarity as in the inclusive “we”; when making a ‘bigger’ criticism the language of formal politeness is used: conventionalised indirect speech acts, hedges etc..

Bergmann suggests other ways by which criticism can be effected by the ‘professional’. He describes how an ‘exploring utterance’, an action that functions as an elicitation, can “because of its indirectness and suggestive telling-format .. be regarded as a proto-typical carrier of insinuation” (Bergmann 1992:156). When the insinuation is of improper behaviour on the part of the hearer it can be classified as criticism. If the hearer responds in a neutral or friendly way to such insinuation s/he accepts the suggestion of wrongdoing. In this way the wrong-doing is accepted as fact by both participants. In his description of interaction between doctor and patient Bergmann (1992) sees the utterances of the ‘professional’ as having an inbuilt, hidden or ‘veiled morality’.

### Response to criticism

Tsui (1994) states that positive responses to a criticism are realised by a second evaluation which agrees with or upgrades the first assessment. Criticism can also be responded to by an apology. A second evaluation which disagrees with or rejects a criticism realises a challenge which is usually avoided unless the interlocutors know each other well. Challenges are often given in weak forms, with use of politeness strategies.

A lack of response usually indicates a rejection of the criticism. An overt rejection of a criticism is dispreferred so silence is a less direct way of indicating disagreement (Phillips 1994).

Verbal agreement expressed with a certain intonation, and facial expression, can indicate less than complete acceptance of the criticism, and may - if the receiver is in a less powerful situation than the speaker - simply indicate that he or she recognises the right of the person to make the criticism: acknowledgement is not necessarily equivalent to agreement.

Little detailed analysis has been conducted on the giving and receiving of criticism within the institutional setting. I looked at the way in which negative criticism was expressed by a number of teachers trainers, and responded to by trainees (Phillips 1997) and found that by far the most common response to criticism in the data was that of agreement in the form of “*Yeah*”, “*Right*”, or a sound of agreement: “*Mmm*” or “*Uhuh*”. This response could indicate acknowledgement rather than agreement. The second most frequent response to criticism in the study was silence. Other responses, which occurred very infrequently, were categorised as justification or excuse. In a study of the functions of silence within the context of teacher training, (Phillips 1994), I found that the trainees’ response to criticism with silence fell largely into two categories:

- a) they can be silent but show by nods, and by writing down the trainer’s comments, that they are in agreement, or -
- b) they can be silent as a way of showing disagreement or resentment at what they perceive to be negative criticism. This may be accompanied by looking down, and by frowning expressions.

I also felt that trainees could be silent because they are upset and do not want to reveal a voice on the edge of tears. Lebra (1987) noted that silence can be associated with hiding the state of emotions - distress, hatred or anger, for example.



### **Criticism in the feedback session**

The feedback session belongs to a set of work or institutional contexts in which criticism of the behaviour of one or more of the participants is to be expected. The nature and purpose of the feedback session authorises the assessor to make such criticisms.

However, as I have noted elsewhere (Phillips 1993), the task of distinguishing the linguistic forms in which criticism is effected is not straightforward; there is no one linguistic form for the function of criticism. Interpreters must assign utterances such values, partly on the basis of their formal features, but partly on the basis of their own (the hearer's) assumptions. Nor is criticism restricted to single, individual discourse acts. The intention to give a negative assessment may be conveyed by a series of acts (and responses) that are not of themselves easily identified as criticism. The understanding of the critical intent is often the result of interpreting longer stretches of discourse. A study of the feedback session has to take such factors into account. Criticism can be realised by the following means: giving a report, giving 'reasons', giving advice, and asking questions. Examples of these ways of criticising, as found in the data, are now given.

#### **Reports**

By presenting the events as factual or objective the speaker can distance him/herself from the inferences that can be drawn. An example of criticism couched as a report is to be found in Session 1, Lines 139-142.

TR1 *The thing became more intense in terms of reading, but they were similar ones. You had a skimming task which was sort of - they had to look at quite carefully to do, and then they had the 'true/false' one, which really were actually two very similar activities.*

The critical intention of the report is clear because the negative assessment has already been made in Line 137:

TR1 *I think I think your task didn't move in intensity.*

### Giving reasons

The assessors often go to great pains to give reasons for their negative evaluation. It is by describing events and giving reasons to explain why they were unsatisfactory, or why they would like alternative behaviour from the trainee/teacher, that the assessors accomplish an ‘assessment activity’.

Examples from Session 1 include Lines 39 - 59 in which TR1 is criticising Cath for misjudging the level of the students. Lines 108 - 125 in which Cath is being criticised for poor classroom management; Lines 142 -179 in which the trainee is being criticised for omitting to do a particular planned activity; Lines 190 - 289 in which a number of reasons are given for the fact that Cath should have dealt with the *style* of the text she was using with her class.

### Advice

Because reasons are given for the negative evaluation, criticism in both sets of feedback session is often indistinguishable from the giving of *suggestions* or *advice* (*see also Section 8.1.3 (b)*). In Session 1 (Lines 66-75) the trainer is outlining what the trainee failed to do, as made specific in Lines 59-62:

TR1 *at this level they need a lot more support than you gave them.*

Much of the criticism made by DOS1 in Session A takes the form of suggesting what could have been done in the lesson (but which was not). For example, in Lines 111-122, she is implicitly criticising the teacher for not having a livelier and more effective introduction to her lesson. In Lines 134-148, and 168-191 she is criticising the teacher for not focusing more explicitly on the grammatical form of the language and for not checking the students’ understanding. Criticism of the fact that the text was underexploited is implicit in the suggestions made between Lines 242-270.

### Questions

As noted in *Section 8.1.1 (a): Questions*, a negative assessment (or ‘bad news’) is often introduced by a question or elicitation. The trainer/DOS can imply criticism by asking reasons for past actions. For example in Session 1 (Line 226):

TR1 *What happened in your lesson plan?*

And in Line 206 when the trainer says:

TR1 *To what extent do you think you really got that out of the text?*

The trainee picks up the implied criticism:

Cath *I didn't think I did very well, no.*

This enables the trainer, by agreeing with the trainee's assessment, to make his criticism less directly:

TR1 *Yeah, that's what I felt.*

Also, in Session A (Line 226):

DOS1 *What was your main aim in using this newspaper article?*

Here, the teacher does not appreciate the critical intent behind the question and the DOS has to be more explicit in Line 242:

DOS1 *And you didn't think of using it erm for some form of skills practice er as well?*

These are examples of what Bergmann (1992) calls an 'exploring utterance'; an elicitation, that insinuates 'improper behaviour' on the part of the hearer, can be classified as criticism. As Bergmann noted about doctors, there is evidence that trainers and DOSs often initiate a negative assessment by insinuating or suggesting that something is wrong and letting the receiver of feedback voice or detail the fault.

### Politeness strategies

(see also *Section 9.1: The use of on-record language and particular politeness strategies*)

There is overwhelming evidence from the data to suggest that the trainers are 'on-record' or unambiguous in their criticism. However, the criticism, is not 'bald-on-record' but tempered by use of a range of politeness strategies. I can identify no instances in any of the feedback sessions in which the assessor criticises an individual directly without some kind of redress. (For a fuller treatment of politeness strategies used in the delivery of criticism in the pre-service feedback session see Phillips (1993).)

One way the assessor softens criticism is to seek aspects of topics on which it is possible to agree, either before or after the criticism. For example in Session 1 (Line 56 - 62):

TR1 *In that way it was a lovely idea but I think at this level they need a lot more support than you gave them.*

In Session A the DOS mitigates the criticism implicit in Line 267:

DOS1 *I just wondered whether you could have exploited it maybe a bit more*

by immediately agreeing with a point made earlier by the teacher:

DOS1 *But yes. I see what you mean - the fact that you've only got an hour, and then the lesson was rapidly coming to an end and so they actually couldn't do very much more.*

### Hedges

Another common way of mitigating criticism is to 'hedge' opinions. For example, *sort of/kind of* is often used as a means of making criticism more acceptable by making the speaker's opinion safely vague. For example:

### Session 2

TR2 *The interest - I didn't feel that you built up the interest in any way, you sort of went straight into it*

Criticism is softened by the use of understatement: *a bit, rather*. For example:

### Session 1 (Line 89)

TR1 *a bit dead*

### Session A (Line 148)

DOS1: *involve them a bit more in the actual rules. Yeah?*

### Session A (Line 267)

DOS1 *I just wondered whether you could have exploited it maybe a bit more*

Hedges that redress face loss by appealing to mutual understanding are *I mean* and *I know*. For example:

Session 1 (Line 121)

TR1 *because er, you know, the others aren't really even being given a chance*

Session 1 (Line 214)

TR1 *And there's quite a lot of humour in there, you know, how much of that did the students get?*

Session A (Line 128)

DOS1 *Just to elicit the difference, you know, erm the different tenses and the different ..?*

Session A (Line 134)

DOS1 *Yes, I mean, I think with this one, erm I wondered whether you could have maybe put the erm the passive*

Use of 'we' and 'you' plural and 'it' to depersonalise the criticism

By using an inclusive 'we' form, when the trainer really means 'you', he or she can greatly soften the threat of criticism as in:

Session 1 (Line 108)

TR1 *I think we need a lot more nomination (i.e. You need to nominate more)*

Line 253

TR1 *I think we did achieve our aims in the sense that may classroom teachers all over the world achieve their aims ... but what about "what is this text really saying?". (i.e. You didn't have the correct aims.)*

Another common device used by some trainers more than others is to replace the personal with the general 'you'. This is very evident in Session 1. For example in Lines 39-49 and 108-122. By mixing 'you' with the inclusive 'we' TR1 is ensuring that the

trainees understand that any implied criticism applies to all members of the group and he is mitigating the face threat to the individual (Cath). As Lakoff (1973) has observed the 'you plural' provides a conventional 'out' for the hearer. Often the use of 'you plural' is combined with the strategy of stating the criticism as a general fault that should be noted by everyone.

Those making negative assessments have other ways of making the criticism less personal. It is noticeable that it is often the 'lesson' or activity that is referred to in critical terms (using *it* or '*the thing*'), rather than the trainee or teacher (using the personal 'you'). For example:

Session 1 (Line 89)

TR1 *The thing seemed a bit dead.*

Line 84:

TR1 *It seems to be a bit static.*

It is interesting to note that in these examples distance or lack of responsibility is also achieved by using the verb *seem*.

Modal verbs and verbs of opinion

One of the most usual ways for 'softening' criticism is to use modality. Many instances of trainers/DOSs being conventionally indirect can be found in the data. Modal verbs are used where declaratives would be more direct. They are conventional devices for sounding tentative and saying 'difficult' things in a more indirect way.

The use of such language as *I think, I feel, I wondered/was wondering, perhaps, maybe* also makes the critical intent less direct by indicating some degree of fallibility - "it's only my opinion and I may be wrong". In these ways the speaker manages to mitigate the criticism while at the same time leaving the hearer in no doubt as to his or her opinion. For example:

Session 1 (Line 174)

TR1 *I think it might have been nice to have actually done that*

Line 137:

TR1 *I think I think your task didn't move in intensity*

Line 59

TR1 *but I think at this level they need a lot more support*

Session 2

TR2 *I didn't feel that you built up the interest in any way*

TR2 *I didn't feel the language they were using was appropriate to what your aim was*

Session A (Line 111):

DOS1 *Uhuh OK. Erm (pause - refers to her notes) Yeah, I think I just wondered whether you could have used this as a warmer at the beginning of the class*

Line 134:

DOS1 *Yes, I mean, I think with this one, erm I wondered whether you could have maybe put the erm the passive, you could you could have highlighted the form first*

Line 168:

DOS1 *Erm, (pause - refers to notes) I just wondered with this, instead of maybe just reading through it erm whether you could have gap-filled. Maybe giving them erm a few gist questions to read through?*

Line 256:

DOS1 *Yes, yes. Because I did wonder whether maybe they could've erm used the text to write a few questions. I don't know - maybe written a few questions where examples of the passive would have come out.*

Prosodic and kinesic hedges

*Ums* and *ers* and hesitations are often a clear indication that a face threatening act is being performed and are notably more common in utterances in the data in which

negative assessment is being made. The trainer/DOS indicates by hesitation and intonation that he/she is unsure of what she is saying, the validity of what s/he is saying, or his/her right to say it. In Session 1, Trainer 1 uses *er/erm* 7 times. In Session A DOS1 uses *er/erm* 25 times.

In sum, there are notable differences in the *amount* of negative assessment made in the pre-service sessions in comparison with the in-service sessions. There are also differences in the *way* negative assessments are made. It is notable that DOS1 uses much more indirect, tentative language than TR1, the trainer. There is an indication that the DOS is less ‘authoritarian’ in her manner of expression than the trainer. This is a typical finding throughout the data. Reasons for this will be discussed in *Chapter 11: The feedback session: discourse, role and function*.

#### Response to criticism

As similarities and differences are to be found in the two sets of data as regards the expression of criticism, so there is in the response to such criticism.

#### Agreement or acknowledgement

As noted above, very little work has been done into criticism within the workplace. Research into criticism in social conversations suggests that the expected response to a criticism is realised by a second evaluation which agrees with or upgrades the first assessment. In an earlier study of pre-service feedback sessions (Phillips 1993) I found that, as expected, by far the most common response to criticism was that of agreement in the form of *Yeah, Right*, or a sound of agreement: *Mmm* or *Uhuh*.

In Session 1 the trainee, Cath, makes such agreeing responses to negative assessments throughout the session. A study of Cath’s paralinguistic behaviour as recorded by video suggested that she is accepting of the trainer’s criticism: nodding, smiling, taking notes (especially when she is replying *Mmm* rather than *yeah*). At certain points she indicates this agreement further by reflecting or exemplifying the critical comments:

Line 93:        *yes, I felt that*

Line 160:     *Exactly, yeah*



- Line 177:      *So do I, yeah*
- Line 210:      *Yeah, I felt that at the end*
- Line 219:      *I know. I really felt that was lost actually. At the end I was quite disappointed.*

Further evidence for this attitude is given in her questionnaire (see Appendix 3) where she states:

*“After feedback I felt encouraged, determined to do better next time. We have just changed TP tutors. The present is much more helpful because he encourages us and gives very constructive comments eg future strategies, rather than dwelling on the things that went wrong.”*

However, verbal agreement expressed with a certain intonation, and facial expression, can indicate less than complete acceptance of the criticism, and may - if the receiver is in a less powerful situation than the speaker - simply indicate that he or she recognises the right of the person to make the criticism. For some of the trainees, notably those in Sessions 2 and 4, a study of their non-verbal behaviour suggests that the ‘agreement’ responses indicate an acceptance of the trainers’ *authority* rather than of their comments. This is supported by remarks made in the trainees’ questionnaires. For example, Alice (Session 4) said she was:

*“not happy with the way feedback went. I don’t think feedback was very helpful tonight - too negative”.*

In the in-service sessions, as exemplified in Session A, there are similar response patterns of agreement/acknowledgement from the teacher at the stage when the DOS is giving her evaluation of the lesson, notably between Lines 111 - 149, 168 - 192, 242 - 248, and 256 - 271. The teacher, Sue, says *Yeah, Right, Uhuh, Mmm* in response to the DOS’s comments and suggestions. Again, there are instances where Sue elaborates on, or ‘upgrades’ her agreement. For example:

- Lines 131:      *yeah, the descriptions of what grammatical things are*
- Line 149:      *Yeah yeah. Well, I’ll do that again another (time?)*
- Line 182:      *As an introduction to the other tenses. Yeah.*

As in Session 1, in Session A I feel that the teacher does agree with the DOS's assessment, and when she is not in total agreement she indicates this, as we shall see below. A study of the video recording shows that she is maintaining eye contact and nodding throughout the assessment stages. Sue's comments on the questionnaire (see Appendix 4), which was filled in immediately after the feedback session, reinforce the impression given by a study of the video:

*"Feedback was positive, Amy (DOS1) was very encouraging. It was helpful - she gave me some good ideas which I will use the next time I do this lesson . Amy (DOS1) is extremely approachable and is always willing to give us as much time as we need. She is also prepared to listen to our opinions/views."*

As a proportion of the overall assessment, negative criticism is less prevalent in the *in-service* session than in the *pre-service* sessions. (This point will be reinforced later when looking at the use of *compliments* or positive assessment within the two types of feedback session). As a consequence there are fewer occasions when the teacher has to respond to negative criticism, compared with those met by the trainees in the pre-service sessions.

#### Silence as response

In an earlier study of silence within the pre-service feedback session I noted that lack of response usually indicates a rejection of the criticism. An overt rejection of a criticism is dispreferred so silence is a less direct way of indicating disagreement (Phillips 1994).

I found the presence of silence as response to be very different within the two sets of data. In fact, this feature of the study represents one of the major differences between the discourse patterns of the in-service as compared with the pre-service sessions. In the pre-service sessions the second most frequent response to criticism, after agreement/acknowledgement, is silence, whereas silence as a response in the in-service sessions is rare.

When the trainees' respond to criticism with silence they do so in two different ways: a) they can be silent but show by nods, and by writing down the trainer's comments that they are in agreement, or b) they can be silent as a way of showing disagreement or resentment at what they perceive to be negative, and possibly unjustified, criticism. This may be accompanied by looking down, and by frowning expressions. I also felt that trainees could be silent because they are distressed and do not want to reveal this distress in their voice.

The general pattern in most of the pre-service sessions is for the trainee to become increasingly quiet as the session progresses. As already noted, the final section of the session is often dominated by the assessor giving his/her assessment of the lesson and suggestions for improvement. The response from the trainee who is receiving feedback is often restricted to sounds of agreement/acknowledgement or silence at this stage. In Session 1, because the trainee feels that the criticism is justified and the suggestions helpful, she continues to give verbal responses to the end of the session. This is not true, however, in all the sessions. In Session 2, in the first half of the session the trainee, Fran, makes 14 utterances. Some of her turns are relatively long, when she is reporting on her lesson at the start of the session. In the second half of the session she responds only twice when asked a direct question by the trainer, and three times with one word utterances. She is passive, is not making eye-contact, not making notes and, towards the end, looking very unhappy. That her silence indicates non-agreement with the way criticism was expressed, if not the content, is reflected in the response she gave in the questionnaire she filled in immediately after the session (see Appendix 3). Fran commented that after feedback she felt *"upset and depressed"* and *"Although the criticism given was in the main constructive, I felt much of it was discouraging - it won't help me do a better lesson"*.

By contrast, silence as response is rarely encountered in the in-service sessions. Although the DOSs dominate the final stage of the sessions all the teachers continue to give verbal responses; Session A is typical of the discourse at this stage in all the in-service feedback sessions.

### Challenges, justification

A second evaluation which disagrees with or rejects a criticism realises a challenge. A study of the literature suggests that challenges are usually avoided unless the interlocutors know each other well. Many responses in the data which show some disagreement with critical assessment can more usefully be categorised as *justification* or *excuse*.

As a difference can be noted between the use of silence as response, so there is a difference in the occurrence of challenges in the two types of data. In a study of the pre-service sessions no examples are to be found of overt challenges to critical assessment from the trainer. However, after *agreement/acknowledgement* and *silence*, the third most common response in the pre-service sessions is that of *justification* or *excuse*. For example in Session 1 Line 98, when the trainee attempts to justify lack of pace:

Cath *they're such a different standard*

and in Lines 142-154, when she is stating her reason for not doing a planned activity:

TR1 *What happened in your lesson plan? You had erm a jumbled, er you were going to jumble it. We talked about it before.*

Cath *Yeah.*

TR1 *You changed your mind on that?*

Cath *I did cos I just thought if they use it afterwards they've got all these pieces of paper (laughs).*

(1 sec)

TR1 *You can give them the complete text afterwards but*

[

Cath *Yeah, but we're trying to save paper (laughs).*

TR1 *Yeah, I'm contradicting myself here aren't I? Erm yes.*

Cath *Yeah, I just thought - yeah (making notes).*

This is the closest Cath comes to mounting a challenge. She finally admits defeat by saying *yeah*.

By contrast the teachers in the in-service sessions are much more willing to argue their point of view. In Session A for example (Lines 242 - 274) the DOS and teacher, Sue, discuss whether Sue could have exploited the text further. Sue challenges this suggestion, in Lines 249 - 252:

*Yeah. I think that would be more a sort of time constraint =*

DOS1

*Uhuh*

Sue *= the fact that we've got an hour and that we've got the notices to do at the start.*

Although the DOS continues to make suggestions she finally concedes Sue's point, in Line 272:

DOS1: *But yes. I see what you mean - the fact that you've only got an hour, and then the lesson was rapidly coming to an end, and so they actually couldn't do very much more.*

Examples of challenges from other sessions in the study include:

#### Session F

DOS4 *Maybe get them to label a diagram with blutac and things like that.*

Donna *I thought about that - it'd take too much time ..... because they've done parts of the body already with Sally I just wanted to bring out some other parts that were new to them*

DOS4 *Yeah*

#### Session D

(After a critical point about giving pronunciation practice)

Jack *No, I don't I don't follow, cos' I usually say it then I ask all of them, then I ask a few of them just to make sure they're saying it. What are you suggesting?*

To sum up: the response to criticism can take the form of agreement/acknowledgement, silence, challenge, or justification/excuse. Examples of straightforward apology, as predicted in social conversations, are not present in the data. The pattern of response does seem to be different from that expected in a social conversation and there are

noticeable differences between the two sets of feedback session. The reasons for these differences will be explored further in *Chapter 11: The feedback session: discourse, role and function*.

### **Compliments in institutional talk**

The second type of assessment, after criticism, is that of *compliment* (see Figure 4, page 124). A compliment is a positive assessment made by the speaker of the hearer, or a third party in which credit given to the third party is also a credit to the hearer. Within the work context someone may be complimented on the behaviour of their team or on that of their students, for example.

A body of knowledge exists on the speech act of complimenting, notably Wolfson (1981, 1983); Manes (1983); Knapp, Hopper et al. (1984); Barnlund and Araki (1985); Holmes and Brown (1987); Holmes (1988, 1988); Nelson, Bakary et al. (1993). The focus of most of these studies is the paying of compliments in the course of everyday, social conversation in a cross-cultural context. There is a lack of evidence regarding how, or even whether, compliments are paid and received in the world of work between people who share the same cultural background. This study focuses on this relatively unknown area.

### **Response to compliments**

While it is appropriate for the receiver of the compliment to agree with or upgrade an assessment which concerns a third party, it is not acceptable to do so for an assessment which makes a positive assessment of the hearer, as this would seem immodest. Pomerantz (1978) wrote one of the earliest and perhaps most detailed accounts of compliment responses among native speakers of English in the United States. She notes *acceptance* or *rejection* as relevant next actions: "Subsequent to compliments second assessments are regularly neither upgraded agreements nor contrastive opposites" (Pomerantz 1978:94). In normal conversation the preferred response is one of acceptance by thanking - by accepting the compliment agreement with the assessment is implicit. Straight disagreements are quite unusual. More often the compliment is downplayed or the credit is shifted to someone or something else. If this 'referent shift'

takes place then it is not usual for downgrading to occur. Another response noted by Pomerantz (1978) is that in which the receiver of the compliment returns the compliment. She also notes that greeting a compliment in silence would be considered impolite. Nelson, El-Batal et al. (1996) found that agreeing responses occurred more frequently in their data than in that of other researchers. Once again, however, this research was not conducted within the context of the work-place.

### **Compliments in the feedback session**

As noted above very little work has been done on the use of compliments within the institutional setting. Clearly, however, complimenting, more broadly described as the giving of positive assessment, can be expected in such institutional encounters as the appraisal interview, the debriefing meeting, and in the subject of this study - the feedback session.

As a compliment is an initiating act (see Figure 4, page 124), and as such is more likely to be made by the 'expert' rather than the 'inexpert', we would expect to find that the assessors make the positive assessment about the trainees or teachers. This is borne out by a study of the data. As it is the trainee/teacher's behaviour which is under discussion it is this behaviour (rather than that of the assessor) which receives positive as well as negative evaluation. In the *pre-service* sessions trainees make assessments, both positive and negative, about other trainees but there are no instances of such judgements being passed on the assessor's behaviour during the sessions.

Although similar in terms of who performs the act of assessing, a study of the two sets of data reveals interesting differences in the degree to which positive, as opposed to negative assessment, is given by the assessor. In the *pre-service* sessions considerably more time is spent on discussing the weak aspects of the lesson than the strong: the assessment is overwhelmingly negative in nature. In one feedback session (Session 2) the trainer makes only one comment that can be interpreted as positive evaluation: *I thought it was nice the way you did that.*

A study of Session 1 identifies a small number of assessment acts as being positive, as follows:

- a) Lines 8 -10: *I rather liked it ... it was excellent*
- b) Line 14: *it was a lovely introduction to the reading, actually, a nice idea*
- c) Lines 51- 56: *I thought the role-play as a response to the text was a lovely one.. the idea of it was wonderful ...and in that way it was a lovely idea*
- d) Line 185: *You had a well-staged skills lesson which led up to a much greater understanding at the end than we had at the beginning*
- e) Lines 250-3: *I think the basics are there and I think we did achieve our aims*

However, after a study of the discourse before and after these utterances it can be argued that only a) can be counted as an unqualified positive assessment. Utterances b) and c) are immediately followed by *but* which introduces a negative assessment. The positive aspect of utterance d) has already been qualified by the preceding *I think on one level you did*, and the trainer then outlines the ways in which the trainee's lesson was not successful (Lines 190-245). Similarly the positive element in utterance e) is immediately limited by the comment (Line 260): *but what about "What is this text really saying?"*

Often positive evaluation is used to introduce or 'soften' negative points. It is a common strategy to begin with a discussion of the good points then go on to the bad. For example, in Session 1 (Lines 10-17) the trainer begins by saying that the listening recording was *excellent* and that it was *a lovely introduction to the reading, a nice idea* but then quickly steers the discussion round to the weak aspect: definition and limitation of aims.

By contrast, in the *in-service* sessions there are many more unqualified positive assessments made by the DOSs. A study of Session A gives evidence of assessment more evenly balanced between positive and negative, than in Session 1. In addition to the positive assessments made directly about the teacher a number of comments which evaluate the students can be interpreted as indirect compliments to the teacher.



In Session A positive assessment can be identified as follows (indirect compliments in italics):

Lines 15-6 (here we assume that 'fitting in' is desirable); *Lines 25-7* (although structured as a question the DOS clearly feels that Sue has achieved these aims); *Lines 41-2*; *Lines 45-9*; *Line 51*; Lines 55-6; Line 101; Lines 124-5; Lines 150-2; Lines 165-6; Line 210; Lines 212-5; *Lines 276-80*; *Lines 289*.

DOS1 does not relate the positive comments directly to the negative but deals with the critical elements separately. The only link from positive to negative that can be identified is in Line 168 when, after praising the text in terms of content and level, she says: *I just wondered with this, instead of maybe reading through it erm whether you could have gap-filled this?*

Reasons for the differences in the two sets of data in terms of both the balance of positive and negative assessment and in the way such assessments are made will be suggested in *Chapter 11: The feedback session: discourse, role and function*.

### Response to compliments/positive assessments

#### Thanking

Pomerantz (1978) claims that in social conversation the preferred response to compliments is one of acceptance by thanking; by accepting the compliment agreement with the assessment is implicit. However, a study of the data shows that this is not a typical response within the setting of the feedback session. There are no examples of thanking within the pre-service sessions. Thanking is found in the in-service sessions, though not frequently. The following three instances are found in the data:

#### Session H

DOS5 *Erm, right - well, I really enjoyed the lesson. Erm it had some really nice stuff in it. I really liked the worksheets.*

Wanda *Thank you*

#### Session C

DOS3 *Mmm - great Japanese pronunciation.*

Judy (laughs) *Ah, thank you. It was taught to me by the students ..*

#### Session B

DOS2 *The street plans, you know - it's it's er smashing. A very nice learning =*

[

John

*Thanks*

DOS2 *= environment.*

In addition, as noted in 7.1.2: *Openings and closings in the feedback session*, DOSs frequently finish the session by thanking the teacher. The teacher responds by returning the thanks. As the DOSs often include a compliment in their closing remarks it is difficult to say whether it is the compliment or the whole session which is the object of (formulaic) thanks, as in these examples:

#### Session B

DOS2 *So thank you very much. I enjoyed coming to watch it.*

John *Thank you. Thanks very much indeed.*

#### Session C

DOS3 *But basically a lovely lesson, and I enjoyed it very much. Thank you.*

Judy *Thank you.*

#### Returning the compliment

Another response noted by Pomerantz is that in which the receiver of the compliment returns the compliment. No instances of this are to be found in either set of data. This is because it is not the assessor's behaviour which is the topic for discussion and no occasion would arise where paying him/her a compliment would be considered appropriate.

#### Silence or agreement/acknowledgement

Pomerantz (1978) also notes that agreeing with a compliment is dispreferred, and greeting a compliment in silence would be considered impolite. Also a straightforward acceptance by means of a nod or acknowledgement is dispreferred. The greeting of

compliments by silence or acknowledgement, however, is common in feedback sessions. This exchange from Session 1 is typical. The trainee, Cath, acknowledges the complimentary comments either with a nod or a *Yeah*.

Session 1 (Lines 51-58)

TR1 *I thought the role-play as a response to the text was a lovely one.*

Cath ( nods)

TR1 *Yeah? The idea of it was wonderful because it is something you've got to have a personal reaction to.*

Cath *Yeah* (nods)

TR1 *And in that way it was a lovely idea =*

[

Cath *Yeah*

In Session A, when DOS1 is praising Sue in Lines 203 - 222, Sue responds to each point with a nod or an acknowledgement. This exchange is typical:

Session A (Lines 150-152)

DOS1 *this is this is good. I liked the worksheet and the fact that it was it was it was definitely at their level.*

Sue *Uhuh*

Disagreement/downgrading

Straight disagreements with compliments are unusual, as predicted, though in Session 1 the trainee, Cath, attempts to downgrade the compliment the trainer pays concerning the tape recording:

Session 1 (Lines 8-9)

TR1 *I rather liked it.*

Cath *Did you like it? I wasn't sure whether they could hear it.*

Instances of where the credit is shifted to someone or something else are more common. For example, in Session 1, Cath responds to a compliment about the tape recording by continuing, in Lines 9-12: *This is Frank's acting skills.*

In sum, the response to compliments within the feedback sessions is not typical of that found in social conversations. The recipient never returns a compliment and does not usually thank the giver. Often the compliment is greeted in silence or with an acknowledgement. It can be argued that this is because all participants see the main function of the sessions as providing feedback, and that positive assessment (or compliments) are to be expected. The fact that the complimenting behaviour is institutionalised seems to affect the type of response felt to be appropriate. It is notable that once again the pre-service session is less similar to a social conversation than the in-service session: the in-service sessions contain some responses, i.e. thanking, which are to be found in conversations between peers.

### **Self-criticism in institutional talk**

The third type of assessment, *self-criticism*, also termed ‘self-deprecation’ (Pomerantz 1984a) or ‘self-denigration’ (Tsui 1994) can be defined as “negative evaluations directed at the speaker him/herself” (Tsui 1994:148).

Self-criticism is present in social conversation, and in talk at work, particularly on those occasions when a person’s behaviour is the main topic of the conversation. As Bergmann (1992) maintains (see 8.1.1(b) *Elicitations*, above), in certain institutional settings the technique is employed of eliciting self-criticism which is then accepted by the professional and becomes ‘agreed’ by both participants. Most studies on this topic have been more concerned with the eliciting techniques employed by the ‘professional’, rather than the self-criticism of the ‘lay person’. Again, this study focuses on all types of assessment, whether performed by the ‘expert’ or the ‘less expert’.

### **Response to self-criticism**

The preferred response in the social context is one of disagreement or downgrading. When downgrading, the self-criticism can be acknowledged but excused in some way. Or the hearer can respond by saying that the negative attribute also applies to him/herself, or that s/he has problems in that area. These are examples of positive politeness which serve to give support and to claim ‘common ground’ (Brown and Levinson 1987) between the two participants.

To agree with the self-denigration is to make a negative evaluation of the speaker which is face-threatening. Critically assessing one's co-participant is a dispreferred action and, as such, is normally performed with delays, withholds, and weakly stated components. "If participants exhibit hesitations, evasiveness, stalling and the like in response to self-deprecations, they may be seen as agreeing with the prior comments" (Pomerantz 1984a:89-90). If participants agree with self-criticism they "endorse the prior criticisms as their own" (Pomerantz 1984a:81). When a self-denigration is responded to by silence or when no overt disagreement is given, the speaker is likely to interpret it as agreement.

Pomerantz (1984a) distinguishes between agreement and acknowledgement. If self-deprecation is responded to by acknowledgement - a nod, "*Uhuh*" etc. - the speaker is encouraged to continue. "The prior self-deprecatory assertion(s) may be referred to by the self-deprecating party as already established and accepted between the parties in productions of admissions, justifications, explanations, laughter and the like" (Pomerantz 1984a:93).

Researchers such as Pomerantz, by labelling agreement as 'dispreferred', indicate that in social conversation this is not expected or common. However, as with compliments, little research has been done to see if such a response is as uncommon in the work setting, particularly in situations where honest and unambiguous assessment is one of the stated purposes of the meeting - understood and accepted as valid by the participants.

### **Self-criticism in the feedback session**

The acknowledged purpose of the feedback session is assessment, and as those whose behaviour is being assessed are often invited to give a report on the lesson they taught, instances of self-criticism are to be expected. For example in Session 1, Line 5, when asked how she felt about her lesson Cath starts:

Cath *There were lots of bits and pieces which weren't quite right - er, you know, like the recording at the beginning wasn't clear enough*

Other examples of self-denigration in Session 1 include:

Line 21:        *I felt it was perhaps a bit rushed.*

Line 97:        *It was quite slow moving. I found it quite difficult.*

Line 207:       *I didn't think I did very well.*

Line 219:       *I really felt that was lost actually.*

Line 247:       *Towards the end I think it was a problem of trying to fit too much in.*

It is notable that, apart from the first instance, the self-criticism arises as a result of a prompt or question from the trainer. As Bergmann (1992) claims for certain institutional settings, the technique is employed of eliciting self-criticism which is then accepted by the professional and becomes 'agreed' by both participants.

The frequency of self-criticism in the pre-service session is in marked contrast with that in the in-service sessions. Session A is typical: there is very little self-denigration by the teacher, Sue. The only possible example is in Line 72: *maybe the gap-fill was slightly below their level*. Moreover, she immediately cancels the critical intention by going on to say: *but ... I thought served the purpose as a basic introduction*.

The assessors in the in-service sessions sometimes invite self-criticism from the teachers (as in Session A, Line 242) but the teachers turn down the invitation, and as we saw above (page 169), often challenge overt negative criticism from the DOS. When asked to give a report on their lesson their self-assessment is generally positive, as we shall see in the section dealing with self-commendation, below.

There is, therefore, a marked difference between trainees and practising teachers in their use of self-criticism. The trainees are much less confident about the worth of their performance and they often take the opportunity to pre-empt criticism they may expect from the trainer. Teachers, on the other hand, are more confident and are much more likely to make positive rather than negative comments about their performance. These points are expounded upon in *Chapter 11: The feedback session: discourse, role and function*.

## Response to self-criticism

### Agreement/acknowledgement

The preferred response to self-criticism in the social context is one of disagreement or downgrading. Agreement is dispreferred as this endorses the prior criticism. However, in the institutional setting it may be that acknowledgement of, or agreement with, self-criticism is appropriate. As Bergmann (1992) suggests the prior self-deprecatory assertion can then be taken as established and referred to by both participants. This is especially true if the self-criticism is elicited or engineered by the 'professional'. A typical example of such an exchange is:

#### Session 1 (Line 206-208)

TR1 *to what extent do you think you got that (the humorous style) out of the text?*

Cath *I didn't think I did very well.*

TR1 *Yeah, that's what I felt.*

Within the pre-service sessions the trainers often acknowledge the validity of self-criticism by nodding or saying *Yeah*, which encourages the speaker to continue. Silence which is normally taken as agreement, and is dispreferred, is also present in the pre-service feedback session. This extract contains examples of acknowledgement and silence as response:

#### Session 3

Sandra *I failed to let them talk and it took me a while for me to warm up the group.*

*They were a bit shy or I don't know them very well or I missed one or two key points.*

TR3 (silence)

Sandra *It took them a while to get talking but then the lesson was not talking =*

[

TR3 *Yeah*

Sandra *= the lesson was reading.*

TR3 *Right*

[

Sandra *Concentrating =*

TR3 (nods)

[  
Sandra = *on reading. It was a long passage =*

TR3 *Yeah*

Sandra = *with lots of words.*

TR3 *Mmm, yeah*

### Disagreement

According to research done into social conversations (see Pomerantz 1984a) the preferred response to self-criticism is disagreement. However, this response in both sets of feedback session is not common. There is one example in Session 1 (Lines 6-10):

Cath *the recording at the beginning wasn't clear enough er*

[  
TR1 *Oh I rather liked it.*

Cath *Did you like it? I wasn't sure whether they could really hear it. This is Frank's*  
=

TR1 *It was excellent.*

To summarise: the response to self-criticism in both sets of data is the reverse of that suggested by research conducted into social conversations. Although acknowledgement and agreement would seem to be dispreferred responses they are, in fact, much more common than disagreement. The function of the feedback sessions, and the roles played by the participants, seem to influence the response patterns. Further discussion related to role and function will be found in *Chapter 11*.

### Self-commendation in institutional talk

*Self-commendation*, the fourth type of assessment (see Figure 4, page 124), is when the speaker makes a positive evaluation about him or herself. Because this violates the social norm of modesty, "a self-commendation is often presented as a report, and the up-shot, which is the positive evaluation, is often left to the addressee" (Tsui 1994:150). As reports are often given in certain types of institutional talk this way of self-praising might be expected to occur during talk at work.



Another method employed to achieve “self-praise avoidance” (Pomerantz 1978:105) is the incorporation of a disclaimer (perhaps by means of a ‘reference shift’), with the positive assessment. For example, a teacher may say that her lesson was a success “*because the pupils worked hard*”.

#### Response to self-commendation

The preferred response to self-commendation is agreement. Disagreement is extremely face-threatening and is almost invariably avoided. The closest the interlocutor can come to disagreement is to withhold endorsement by remaining silent.

Little research has been done into the study of self-commendation and its response in the work setting. It is interesting to see whether the norms that apply in ordinary conversation pertain in an institutional context.

#### Self-commendation in the feedback session

In the feedback sessions, self-commendation is often couched as a report, rather than in more direct ways which may seem immodest. As the trainees and teachers are often asked to provide a report on their lesson they are given more opportunity for self-commendation than would be usual in an everyday social conversation. There is also perhaps less need for modesty inhibiting self-praise because of the recognised evaluative function of the sessions.

However, an examination of the data from the pre-service sessions shows that, when invited to report on their own performance, trainees are much more likely to raise negative rather than positive points. The trainee, Cath, in Session 1 is typical. She makes only two utterances that can be categorised as self-commendation:

Line 14:       *So it livened them up. It got them interested.*

Line 20:       *I was reasonably happy*

Even in these examples the object of praise is *it* rather than *I* and she modifies *happy* with *reasonably*. Compare these claims with the examples of self-criticism noted on pages 177-8.

It is also interesting to compare the trainee's behaviour with that of the practising teacher in Session A who is again typical of all the teachers in the study. Sue, when invited to give her opinion of the lesson takes full advantage of the situation to make favourable comments about the lesson and the students in her class: Lines 2-5, 7-8, 14, 19-24, 28-29, 33-34, 39-40, 43-44, 57, 82, 102-103, 110, 198-199, 224-225, 228-229, 235-236, 238-241. In a number of these comments she is praising the performance of the students, but at the same time, by implication, her own performance and materials. When her self-commendation is compared with self-criticism, as noted on page 178, the contrast is marked.

In sum, although both the trainees and teachers were invited in a neutral way to comment on their lessons they chose to do so in completely different ways: the trainees chose to emphasise the negative aspects, and the teachers the positive aspects. Reasons for this difference are explored in *Chapter 11*.

#### Response to self-commendation

Within the feedback sessions the preferred response to self-commendation is agreement. The reaction to self-praise by both sets of assessors takes the form of encouragement, especially on the part of the DOSs.

The trainer in Session 1 responds very positively.

#### Lines 14-15

Cath *So it livened them up. It got them interested.*

TR1 *It was a lovely introduction to the reading, actually, a nice idea ..*

The DOS in Session A also acknowledges/agrees with the teacher's positive assessment by saying *Mmm* and *Yes* regularly and making positive remarks to back up those of Sue, for example, in Lines 39-42:

Sue *... I have quite good rapport with them*

DOS1 *Yes no. They work they work well together as well and they worked hard as well during the lesson too.*

There are no occasions in the data where an assessor openly disagrees with self-commendation. They are more likely to wait and bring up any unfavourable comments at a later point in the conversation. As disagreement is too face-threatening to do directly, silence is often used to indicate lack of agreement. However, there are no examples of this in Session 1 and Session A, and few in the data overall. In sum, the response to self-commendation within the feedback session is very similar to that found within social conversations.

### **8.1.3 Directives**

*Directives* form the third category of Initiating Acts after *Elicitations* and *Informatives* (see Figure 4, page 124). Tsui (1994) characterises directives as acts which prospect a non-verbal action from the addressee. She suggests that there are two major categories of directives: those which are issued for the benefit of the speaker him/herself - *mandatives* - and those which are issued for the benefit of the addressee - *advisives*.

- a) Mandatives (instructions and threats)
- b) Advisives (advice and warning)

Tsui (1994) goes on to endorse the distinction made by Katz (1977) and Searle and Vanderveken (1985): there are two kinds of advisives: one - *advice* - in which the desirable consequence of complying is given or implied and the other - *warning* - in which the undesirable consequence of not complying is stated or implied. For the purposes of this study the term 'advice' will be used, as Tsui (1994) advocates, to cover acts which have been referred to in the speech act literature as those which 'advise', 'suggest' and 'recommend'.

### **Directives in institutional talk**

Directives can be identified as speech actions performed by speakers in the institutional setting (ten Have 1991). It is to be expected that directives are issued by the more powerful speaker - the professional - and not by the less powerful - the lay person. Once

again, however, there has been very little research conducted which focuses on this particular discourse act within ‘talk at work’.

### Response to directives

Response to directives is frequently not easy to evaluate as it may take the form of an action which is often delayed beyond the time span of the conversation analysed. All that can be analysed within the conversation is the immediate response as an indication as to whether the directive might later be complied with.

### Directives in the feedback session

In both sets of feedback session *advisives* (in particular advice) are common while *mandatives* are not typical.

As expected, directives are issued by the more powerful speaker, the assessor. The giving of advice, suggestions and recommendations is a marked characteristic of all the feedback sessions. Typically, advice is given by the assessor in the second half of the session, after the person receiving feedback has had an opportunity to give his/her report of events. In Session 1 the following can be identified as examples of directives given by the trainer:

Line 69:       *So actually give them a role to play ..*

Line 73:       *Give them some guidance to direct them.*

Line 120:      *I mean we can just say “Just a minute, Swava, let’s see if anyone else knows”.*

Line 149:      *You can give them the complete text afterwards ..*

Line 234:      *Get it beyond these factual questions ..*

Line 237:      *Get on to the supposition questions.*

Line 280:      *... we mustn’t undervalue them in language terms ....*

In Session A the following utterances can be identified as directives given by the DOS.

Line 148:      *..involve them a bit more in the actual rules. Yeah?*

Line 257:      *Maybe giving them a few gist questions*

However, it must be emphasised that although isolated utterances can be identified as directives the intention behind much of what the assessors say is that of giving advice, even though many of the individual speech acts which achieve this intention may be identified as elicitation, assessment etc.. It is notable that the DOSs are much less direct in the way they give advice, preferring to elicit suggestions from the teachers themselves, or to make very tentative recommendations. Compare :

Session A (Line 111): *I just wondered whether you could have used this as a warmer with:*

Session 1 (Line 234): *Get it beyond these factual questions*

#### **8.1.4 Initiating Acts: summary and conclusions**

Initiating Acts can be categorised under the headings of *Elicitations*, *Assessment* and *Directives*, and further subdivided into, for example, *Questions*, *Self-Criticism*, *Advisives*. Although these sub-divisions are widely recognised and referred to in the literature, it is interesting to note that the attention paid to these different areas in the study of discourse within institutional settings varies widely. For example, a great deal of work has been done on the way ‘professionals’ ask questions and elicit responses from the ‘non-professional’, whereas there is very little information about the way directives are given, compliments are paid or the response made to self-commendation.

A study of Initiating Acts within the two sets of data, as in the studies cited from the literature, reveals that certain participants perform the majority of the initiating acts and certain participants respond. As a reflection of the imbalance of power already noted, initiating acts are taken by the ‘professional’ - the assessor. The overall patterns reinforce the view that the feedback session can be categorised as an institutional genre.

However, an examination in detail of the use of initiating acts and their response has uncovered some interesting differences between the two sets of data. The reasons for these differences will be looked at more closely in *Chapter 11: The feedback session: discourse, role and function*.

## 8.2 Response

Although response to the different categories of Initiating Acts, as found in the literature and in the data of this study, has been examined above, it is also useful to look at some general observations that have been made about response that are not confined to particular speech acts. This section will focus on:

8.2.1 Continuers, and third-turn responses - acknowledgements, endorsements, concessions

8.2.2 Silence as response

### *8.2.1 Continuers, and third-turn responses*

#### **a) Continuers**

Perhaps the most common response in everyday conversation is that of the continuer. Typical examples of continuers include - *Mmm*, *Uhuh*, *Yeah*, or a non-verbal signal such as a nod. These do not impart information about the hearers' opinion of what they have heard. Continuers are very common in everyday exchanges between two or three participants. The person being addressed, with whom the speaker is making eye-contact, is socially obliged to utter continuers or show through para-linguistic means (nods) that they are listening. It is also common to find *Uhuh* etc. as a sign of recognition, after the speaker is referring to something s/he is not sure the listener knows about.

Continuers also act as a social lubricant, as an indication that the person speaking is 'authorised' to tell the story, give the assessment etc., and as encouragement to continue. Schegloff claims that "perhaps the most common usage of "*uh huh*" etc. is to exhibit on the part of its producer an understanding that an extended unit of talk is underway by another, and that it is not yet been (even ought not yet be) complete. It takes the stance that the speaker of that extended unit should continue talking" (Schegloff 1982:77). The reaction of the listener can encourage the speaker to start a new turn - so creating a multi-unit turn. With the use of continuers, speakers can "show their intention to pass the opportunity to take a turn at talk" (Schegloff 1982:81).

By using continuers, speakers “display their understanding of the current state of talk” (Schegloff 1982:81). Their use can be interpreted as showing understanding, because the hearer has passed up the opportunity to show misunderstanding. Schegloff maintains that, as well as indicating understanding, continuers are also signs of agreement - “a search for the mechanism by which interest, attention, or understanding are exhibited by this behaviour, should also deal with the apparent exhibiting of agreement” (Schegloff 1982:79).

### **Continuers in institutional talk**

In the work place there is evidence that the nature and the use of continuers may be different in certain contexts from that which would be normal in a social conversation. For example, in meetings of several people relatively long turns are routine and typically unmonitored; Boden (1994) points out that in meetings the typical interjection of continuers is notably absent. She postulates that this may be because of the number of people involved and/or because of the nature of the talk.

It is interesting that Schegloff (1982:79) writes of an “*apparent* exhibiting of agreement” (my italics). Those using continuers may not necessarily agree with the sentiments of what they are hearing, but are content, or obliged, to let the speaker finish his/her report, assessment, etc.. If the ‘listener’ is the professional he or she may be reserving judgement: it may suit his or her purpose to delay giving an opinion. West (1984), in her study of doctor/patient exchanges, feels this is true of questioning within three-part exchanges, with the optional addition of a third-turn, in which the doctor does not elaborate or give information about the response to the question. By asking a question and responding to the answer given in a non-committal way with a *Mmm* or *Uhuh* - an acknowledgement rather than a true response - the doctor can continue questioning without revealing his or her opinion.

If the listeners are the ‘lay persons’ or the people with less power they may never have the opportunity, or feel able, to give their opinion, for reasons associated with role within the institutional context. It is here that the function of such *Uhuhs*, *Mmms* and nods are difficult to interpret. Such sounds and gestures may not indicate agreement but

acknowledgement (Phillips 1997). They could mean *'Yes, I see that is your opinion and you have the authority to voice that opinion, even if I do not agree with that opinion'*.

### **Continuers within the feedback session**

As found in everyday conversation, the most common response in both sets of data is that of the continuer. Boden (1994) felt that in meetings the typical interjection of continuers is absent because of the number of people involved and/or because of the nature of the talk. However, I found that continuers were common in the feedback sessions, probably because the number of participants in the 'meetings' is small. Even in the pre-service sessions the conversation at any one time is usually between two people only. The pattern followed that found in such institutional conversations as doctor/patient interactions.

As West (1984) suggests in her study of doctor/patient exchanges, there is evidence that the 'experts' use continuers to reserve or delay judgement. By using an acknowledgement rather than a true response the assessor can encourage the teacher to continue. For example, between Lines 60 and 109 the DOS in Session A uses continuers to encourage the teacher, Sue, to continue her report - to give her a 'fair hearing'. It is not until Line 111 that she picks up on some points concerning the stage of the lesson just reported upon.

As noted above, the use of continuers and nods by the less powerful person in the conversation is more difficult to interpret. Such sounds and gestures may not indicate agreement but acknowledgement. In Session 1 the trainee, Cath, uses a number of continuers and non-verbal responses such as nods, and note-taking throughout the session. Her responses to the Questionnaire (see Appendix 3) would indicate that the continuers showed understanding and agreement (in addition to acknowledgement). In Sessions 2 and 4, however, although both trainees used continuers at the beginning of the session, (and responded by silence at the end of the session), their answers to the questionnaire (see Appendix 3) would seem to indicate acknowledgement rather than agreement.



## **b) Third-turn responses**

### **Third turn responses in institutional talk**

Although response has been dealt with as preferred or dispreferred second turns to initiating turns, described above in *Section 8.1*, a separate focus on response patterns is justified, and in particular a study of the third-turns, or ‘third turn component’ (Frankel 1984), that Tsui (1994) feels are typical in most conversations.

Third-turn responses can be very short and expressed through such sounds as *Yeah*, *Uhuh*, *Wow*, and through non-verbal means such as nods and shrugs. In 1982 Schegloff (1982) claimed that these short types of response were often ignored when spoken discourse was described. Only the ‘real talk’ was thought of as important, the other was viewed as “conversational ‘detritus’ (apparently lacking semantic content, and seemingly not contributing to what the discourse ends up having said)” (Schegloff 1982:74). However, more attention has been paid to these types of responses in recent years, including studies of their presence in talk at work. Many of these short responses can be described as ‘continuers’, and the points made by West (1984), concerning the function of continuers as third-turn responses, has been noted above.

Tsui (1994) identifies three categories of follow-up acts:

- endorsements
- concession
- acknowledgement.

**Endorsements** are enthusiastic responses, sometimes upgraded from the second turn response: the response might be concerned with thanking or with comments on the information provided. Such a third-turn response is usually prospected by a positive second-turn response. Examples of endorsements within the institutional setting include approval expressed in the ‘*Right*’ given by teachers to the ‘correct’ response to a question or elicitation. A number of examples are given by Sinclair and Coulthard (1975). These types of responses are always given by the more powerful to the less powerful participants - never the reverse.

### Endorsements within the feedback session

Endorsements as third-turn response, commonly given by the more powerful participant to indicate approval within institutional settings such as schools, are to be found commonly within the pre-service sessions, but rarely in the in-service sessions. For example, in Session 1 (Lines 15-19):

TR1 *...what's' the most important thing you've got to think about in terms of deciding whether we are happy with the lesson?*

Cath *Erm the achievement of aims.*

TR1 *OK*

### Session 1 (Lines 133-135)

TR1 *How are we going to introduce pace here?*

Andrea *I think contrast different activities one after another.*

TR1 *Yeah*

The trainer uses *OK* and *Yeah* to indicate that the trainee has given the 'correct' answer.

**Concessions** are prospected by a negative second-turn response. Their purpose is to minimise the face threatening effect. Typical examples include: '*Oh, I see.*' '*Yes, I understand.*' '*I know.*' '*Well, never mind.*' Goffman (1971) studied how face-threat is minimised by the use of these types of third-turn responses.

### Concessions within the feedback session

Within the feedback session concessions are sometimes used by the assessors to 'back down'. They are more common in the in-service sessions because, as noted above - pages 169, practising teachers are more likely to challenge the opinion of the assessor than inexperienced trainees. However, there is an example in Session 1 (Lines 149-153):

TR1 *You can give them the complete text afterwards but*

[

Cath *Yeah, but we're trying to save paper (laughs)*

TR1 *Yeah, I'm contradicting myself here, aren't I? Erm yes.*

In Session A (Lines 242-274) there is an extended discussion as to whether the teacher, Sue, should have used the text for skills practice. Sue argues that she did not have the necessary time and finally the DOS concedes this point, in Lines 272-274:

DOS1 *But yes. I see what you mean - the fact that you've only got an hour ...*

**Acknowledgements** such as *OK*, *Right*, *Yeah*, or the repetition in a low key of part of the information contained in the second-turn response, constitute recognition that the second response has been heard, understood and accepted. As discussed above, in relation to *continuers*, a distinction has to be made between acknowledgement of the truth of an utterance, and an acknowledgement of the person's right to say it. This distinction is not always clear, and especially so in situations in which one of the participants is in a more powerful position *vis-à-vis* the other.

Acknowledgements within the feedback session (see also *Continuers*, pages 187-8)

In both sets of feedback session acknowledgements are commonly used by both the assessors and those being assessed. In the pre-service feedback sessions acknowledgements are used much more frequently by the trainee than by the trainer. In the in-service sessions, where there is less of a power imbalance, the frequency of acknowledgements is more equally distributed between participants although distributed unevenly at different stages of the conversation.

### 8.2.2 *Silence as response*

*Silence* as response is the third special category of response to be examined, after *continuers* and *third-turn* responses. In face-to-face interaction the follow-up move is often realised by silence, accompanied by 'positive' or 'negative' paralinguistic features such as a smile, a nod, a grimace, a frown, a shrug or a puzzled expression.

Silence may be used:

- to indicate disagreement, or to elicit a more acceptable answer
- to elicit clarification
- to avoid evaluation.

#### To indicate disagreement, or to elicit a more acceptable answer

If there is no third move but the second turn is met by silence it may be an indication that something is wrong (Tsui 1994). Silence signals a dispreferred response or is in itself a dispreferred response. The first speaker often resumes talk in the gap and may modify or justify his or her first remarks if s/he thinks that silence equals disagreement. If the remarks are modified so that the second speaker can agree then discord is averted.

#### To elicit clarification, or further information

If the hearer has not heard properly the silence, if accompanied by a puzzled expression, can serve to ask for clarification. As noted above, page 144, in *Response to Reports*, the third turn in a Question-Answer-‘Oh-receipt’ sequence may be avoided by questioners to propose that they have not been informed.

#### To avoid evaluation

In a classroom exchange, as Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) point out, when a follow-up move is not found it has almost certainly been withheld for some strategic purpose. If the evaluation would have been a negative one, had it occurred, its absence could be seen as deliberate withholding by the teacher in order to avoid giving an explicit negative evaluation. They found that teachers who do not want to discourage pupils from answering questions often use this strategy. Greatbach (1992) comments on the ‘professional’ use of silence in the context of an interview: by withholding response to the interviewee’s answers the interviewers avoid giving any indication as to their assessment of them.

In a study of the functions of silence within the context of teacher training (Phillips 1994), I found that both trainers and trainees use silence, but for different purposes.

#### **Silence within the feedback session**

Silence as response is used by both the assessors and the trainees/teachers. The functions performed by such silence are as expected in institutional settings. A study of the data from the in-service sessions reinforced findings from my earlier study of the use of silence within pre-service teacher training sessions (Phillips 1994): the assessors use

silence to indicate that there is more to be said; to encourage inference; to withhold or delay response; to ignore unwelcome or irrelevant contributions. The trainees and teachers use silence to indicate lack of understanding or knowledge; with nods, to show agreement and/or acknowledgement; to show disagreement or resentment; to hide their emotions. One noticeable pattern is that trainees and teachers tend to become more silent as the sessions progress. This is particularly marked in the pre-service sessions when the assessment is largely negative.

### **8.2.3 Response: summary and conclusions**

Having studied response to different discourse acts (in *Section 8.1*), and the use of particular patterns of response through *continuers*, *third-turns* and *silence*, it is clear that response patterns found within the feedback sessions largely follow those found in other institutional, as compared with social, settings. A list of such characteristics include the following.

- Generally, the more powerful participant initiates and the less powerful responds.
- There is evidence of the ‘professional’ withholding expressions of surprise or sympathy; the absence of ‘*Oh*’ as a ‘change of state marker’.
- A variety of routine utterances such as second assessments, and second stories are generally absent in the assessors’ contributions.
- Examples of straightforward apology in response to criticism, as predicted in social conversations, are not present in the data.
- There are few examples of thanking in response to compliments within the pre-service sessions.
- According to research done into social conversations the preferred response to self-criticism is disagreement. However, this response in both sets of feedback session is not common; agreement is more likely.
- The use of continuers, third-turn responses, and in particular the use of silence as response by the different participants, is typical of response in other institutional encounters.

In sum, the response patterns as evidenced in the data characterise the feedback sessions as typical of institutional genres.

## CHAPTER 9: PARTICULAR FEATURES OF THE DISCOURSE

Whereas *Chapters 5 - 8* reviewed the features of discourse in the institutional setting in terms of *organisation* and individual *discourse acts*, this chapter is devoted to *particular features* of ‘talk at work’ which have been referred to, but not covered adequately, in these previous sections. These features will be examined under the headings:

- the use of on-record language and particular politeness strategies
- lexical choice.

### 9.1 The use of on-record language and particular politeness strategies

#### 9.1.1 *The use of on-record language and particular politeness strategies in institutional talk*

There is some evidence that in talk at work politeness strategies are employed in ways somewhat differently from in everyday conversations between peers. In my study of the language of criticism within a teacher training context (Phillips 1993) I found aspects which were not predicted from the study of social conversations. Brown and Levinson (1987) predicted that most criticism would be expressed using either off-record, and positive politeness strategies, or be ‘bald-on-record’. I found, however, that the criticism was nearly always ‘on-record’. Although ‘on-record’ the criticism was not ‘bald-on-record’, but almost invariably redressed in some way. Positive politeness strategies were employed, as predicted, but negative politeness strategies, not predicted, were also evident.

Bergmann, on the other hand, found that doctors used euphemism - a strategy for making comments ‘off-record’: “I would claim that many descriptors which can be found in the psychiatric information-eliciting tellings can be taken to be at least somewhat euphemistic” (Bergmann 1992:153).

Grainger (1990) found a surprising mixture of negative and positive politeness strategies being used by care workers in a hospital setting. She poses the question: “The extent of the imposition or relationship between the participants has not suddenly changed so why

this mixture of friendly and formal language?” (Grainger 1990:150). She suggests that “the answer lies in the nature of the nurse’s professional identity as both carer and controller; she has multiple communicative goals such that she needs to orient to different face wants simultaneously” (Grainger 1990:150). I note that this explanation could also apply to the trainers’ behaviour: “trainers see one of their roles as that of ‘carer’ - a nurturer of talent, the person who is responsible for the morale of the group, a counsellor who is aware of the trainees’ feelings; but they are also conscious of their role as ‘controller’ - someone who ensures that standards are met and that the reputations of the institutions they represent are defended” (Phillips 1993:37).

A special aspect of politeness that has been identified within talk at work by several researchers is that of *neutrality* (Clayman 1992). Drew and Heritage note that “professional cautiousness appears to be a feature of institutional talk” (Drew and Heritage 1992:46). They agree with Heritage and Greatbach’s (1991) findings: that a certain style of language “permits interviewers to ask challenging questions while nonetheless maintaining a ‘neutralistic’ position” (Drew and Heritage 1992:47). Clayman (1992), in his study of news interviews, asserts that those being interviewed accept this impersonal aspect of the conversation by not assuming that the speaker is expressing his or her own person view but that of the institution he or she represents. He says that “neutrality is a socially organized, or more specifically an interactionally organized phenomenon, something that parties to an interview ‘do together’” (Clayman 1992:194).

One way of achieving neutrality is by means of ‘footing’ - a term used to describe the attributing of controversial comments to others. Clayman agrees with Pomerantz’s findings (1984b): “In the context of interpersonally ‘delicate’ actions like disagreements, criticisms, and accusations, interactants can be cautious or circumspect by attributing such actions to others” (Clayman 1992:195-6). The ‘others’ can be very faceless - the institution or bureaucracy. Clayman (1992) points out that by attributing comments to others, either named experts or the general - “*it is said*”, “*some people say*” - the speaker can distance him/herself and remain neutral. It “shields (the speakers) from having to accept responsibility for their words” (Clayman 1992:180). He notes that

footing shifts tend to be restricted to relatively controversial opinion statements and that “by virtue of these practices interviewers are able to give voice to controversial points of view without going on record as endorsing such views” (Clayman 1992:196).

### ***9.1.2 The use of on-record language and particular politeness strategies within the feedback session***

There is evidence that in the feedback sessions politeness strategies are employed somewhat differently from in everyday conversations between peers. When giving feedback assessors are authorised by their role to ask searching questions and make evaluative remarks about another’s behaviour; sometimes the evaluation is negative which would be inappropriate or impertinent in another setting. However, politeness strategies are employed to make the encounter face-saving and non-confrontational. There is a lot of evidence in both sets of data for the employment of face-saving devices such as mitigators and euphemistic descriptors - negative politeness strategies, so that the language is never ‘bald-on-record’. (See *Criticism* pages 159-164, for examples.)

There is a difference in degree between the pre-service and in-service sessions, however. As noted above in *Criticism* (page 157), the DOSs are less direct in the way they express criticism (the prime example of face-threatening behaviour), employing far more politeness strategies than the trainers in the pre-service sessions. There is evidence of the use of such strategies in a defensive way, as suggested by Bergmann (1992), to head off possible upcoming disagreement by the other participant in the exchange - the teacher. It may be that in this wish for short-term harmony a DOS (particularly an inexperienced one) is not prepared to tackle real problems. This is another indication that the power relationship between the participants within the in-service sessions is more equal than in the pre-service sessions.

There is little clear evidence of that aspect of politeness that has been identified within talk at work by several researchers - that of *neutrality*. The assessors do not attribute their remarks to others or to an outside authority, but are prepared to take responsibility for their own evaluation. However, the assessors can express a view which is recognised by both participants as being that of the professional body, the institution and, in the in-



service sessions, of the examinations board. The 'feedback form' required by the school is referred to and it is understood that the assessors have the backing of the institution; they are authorised to express these views by virtue of their role. Direct reference to an outside body is not, therefore, necessary.

## **9.2 Lexical choice**

### ***9.2.1 Lexical choice in institutional talk***

Lexical choice can be used within the institutional setting to establish roles, groups and power relationships. Brown and Levinson (1987) suggest that, through lexical choice, positive politeness strategies can be employed that claim 'common ground'. By these means it is possible to convey in-group membership: use of address forms (eg first names); use of dialect words, jargon or slang. I found (Phillips 1993) that the use of in-group jargon is quite common between participants within a teacher training context; that one of its purposes is to include the trainees in the special group of 'we teachers who use a special language'.

Another positive politeness strategy is that of including both the speaker and hearer in the activity, for example, by using an inclusive 'we' form when the speaker really means 'you'. Brown and Levinson (1987) suggest that if the speaker and hearer are co-operating then they share goals in some domain, they belong to the same 'in-group'. I found (Phillips 1993) that, in the teacher training context, trainers often softened the face threat of criticism by using the inclusive 'we' and thus deflecting the criticism away from the individual.

On the other hand, within the institutional setting lexical choice can reinforce the imbalance of power between participants. For example, medical jargon, and court room terminology can confound the lay person and put him or her at a disadvantage *vis-à-vis* the professional. Fairclough (1989) suggests that the use of jargon can also be a mark of authority - used by those in power to exclude others. Also, the inclusive 'we', rather than creating a bond between speaker and hearer, can emphasise the difference between the professional perspective and that of the lay person. As Drew and Heritage point out,

at times “Speakers use the self-referring ‘we’ to invoke an institutional over a personal identity” (Drew and Heritage 1992:30). In this way the speaker is invoking the authority of the institution, rather than taking personal responsibility for the opinion.

### ***9.2.2 Lexical choice in the feedback session***

There is evidence in both sets of data that through lexical choice strategies are employed to claim ‘common ground’, to convey in-group membership. For example, participants in both types of session address each other by their first names, and make use of jargon. Examples (underlined) from Session 1 include:

Line 108:      *I think we need a lot more nomination*

Lines 82-3:    *Another thing I thought we should all be doing in this group - perhaps with a warmer ...*

Examples from Session A include:

Line 3:            They had prior knowledge of the passive

Line 48:          authentic materials

Another lexical choice that serves to include both the speaker and hearer in the activity is that of the inclusive ‘we’ form when the speaker really means ‘you’. As already noted (see page 161), assessors often soften the face threat of criticism by using the inclusive ‘we’ and thus deflect the criticism away from the individual. If the self-referring ‘we’ is used to invoke an institutional over a personal identity it is done to include all participants within that institutional frame.

Within the feedback session, there is no evidence that lexical choice is used to reinforce the imbalance of power between participants, to confound the lay person or to put him or her at a disadvantage *vis-à-vis* the professional.

### 9.3 Particular features of the discourse: summary and conclusions

To sum up: in both sets of feedback session there is evidence of the use of politeness strategies and of lexical choice which typify the conversations as being typical of institutional encounters. However, there is a notable absence of features which characterise very formal institutional discourse. These findings confirm that both feedback sessions are towards the more informal end of the range of institutional encounters. Once again there is a perceptible difference in the language used in the pre-service and the in-service sessions. These differences and the reasons for them will be explored further in *Chapter 11: The feedback session: discourse, role and function*. Before this description and analysis, however, in the next chapter, *Chapter 10*, the final chapter in Part Two, I summarise the findings from *Chapters 4 - 9* and examine the evidence for the inclusion of the feedback session within the type of discourse described as 'talk at work'.

## CHAPTER 10: THE FEEDBACK SESSION AS INSTITUTIONAL TALK

As stated in the *Introduction*, on page 16, the first of the three major aims of this study is:

- *to describe and analyse conversations taking place within two sets of feedback sessions and to examine to what extent they exhibit features of 'institutional talk': to assess to what extent the feedback sessions contain features typical of other examples of talk at work, and how they differ from informal or non-institutional conversation. To determine to what extent the feedback session can be seen to belong to the type of discourse described as 'talk at work'.*

In this chapter I will refer to the research findings described in *Chapters 4-9* and argue that there is a very strong case for the teacher training feedback session to be included in the category of 'talk at work', or institutional talk. I will also describe how, although both can be claimed to belong to the same genre, there are important differences between the two types of feedback session, particularly in terms of their 'formality'.

In *Chapters 4 - 9*, I reviewed the literature dealing with 'talk at work'; the features that have been identified as characteristic of institutional conversations were described and examined. In each chapter there then followed a description and analysis of the data from the two sets of feedback session. To facilitate description and analysis these features were grouped under six headings, although the inter-relatedness of the features was constantly emphasised:

- the participants and the context;
- the overall structure and organisation of the talk;
- conversational management;
- conversational patterning;
- discourse acts;
- particular features of the discourse.

The description and analyses in *Chapters 4-9* provides ample evidence to show that both types of feedback session conform in many ways to the type of conversation described as being typical of institutions or organizations.

## 10.1 Participants and context

In *Chapter 4*, a review of the research focusing on the **participants** and the **context** showed that the orientation of the participants to the setting, their perception of their roles, and the power relationships, are key elements in shaping institutional conversations. The physical and temporal contexts are related to these features, and also exhibit certain characteristics.

The participants in the feedback sessions demonstrate features in common with those in other institutional interactions in a number of ways. As in many institutional encounters the participants in the feedback sessions can be categorised as ‘professional’/‘lay-person’, or more accurately ‘expert’/‘non-expert’ in the *pre-service* sessions, and ‘more expert’/‘less expert’ in the *in-service* sessions. In all the sessions there is one participant who represents (at least one) formal organisation. There is clear evidence in this study to show that the specific role-sets result in asymmetric power relations: the assessor, who represents the institution, has more power than the other participant(s). Asymmetry of **power** is a marked characteristic of institutional talk and there are clear indications that the **roles** assigned to, and recognised by, the participants in feedback sessions have consequences for the power relationships within the encounter. These, in turn, have been shown to influence the behaviour of the participants during the session, as exhibited in the talk.

The location of the institutional conversation is usually that ‘belonging to’ the professional/expert, not the lay person, and the more formal the conversation the more likely this is to be. The **physical context** of the encounters in both sets of data belongs to the ‘expert’, the assessor. However, although held in the institution, other aspects of the ‘place’ indicate that the sessions are towards the ‘informal’ end of the formal/informal range of institutional encounters.

An aspect which has been noted as distinguishing the institutional conversation from the casual is that the time for such talk is often pre-arranged and the arrangement is generally determined by the professionals. For all the feedback sessions a **period** was set aside for the express purpose of having a specific kind of conversation and all the sessions in the study were pre-arranged at the convenience of the trainer or DOS, and the institution, rather than that of the trainees or teachers.

The trainer or DOS, acts as the 'chair' of the 'meeting' and determines the timing. Invariably they open the formal proceedings of the meeting. As with many other institutional encounters, there is preparation to be done and an **agenda** (albeit an informal one) which is set by the assessor; there is paperwork to be brought and follow-up work to be done after the meeting. Formal records are kept on certain aspects of the 'meeting', the equivalent of 'minutes'. Reference is made to future actions that will take place as a result of the sessions; these can be seen as equivalent to 'Action Points' noted during a business meeting.

The sessions that made up the data have been shown to exhibit features of action and social relations that are characteristic of a particular **setting**. The institutional nature of the setting has been demonstrated to be one to which all the participants are oriented; their behaviour, as evidenced by their talk, demonstrates that they have clear ideas as to the purpose of the meeting, their role, and the roles of the other participant(s).

## **10.2 Overall structure and organisation of the talk; conversation management and conversational patterning**

In *Chapters 5 -7* evidence from the literature was cited to suggest that institutional conversations have a certain structure, and can be identified by certain types of **sequences**; they have an overall shape which is different from that of social conversations, and they contain recurring **patterns** or routinised language. When the detail of the organisation of institutional talk is examined, the characteristic **turn-taking**

and **topic management** patterns are found to be closely related to the imbalance of power between participants.

Evidence from the data showed a high degree of consistency in the general shape and structure of the feedback sessions. The interactional nature of the encounter is much more foregrounded than in less structured conversations, and examples of formal features which serve to structure that interaction were given. In addition, it has been shown that the conversations in the feedback sessions are shaped primarily by the assessor, or the person representing the institution.

Certain patterns were identified in the feedback sessions, those Drew and Heritage refer to as “functionally related standard sequences” (Drew and Heritage 1992:40). For example, there are standard ways of **opening** and **closing** the conversations, and of **formulating** and **summarising**. There is also evidence that **topic** areas considered appropriate are those prescribed by the institution, to some extent by means of a written schedule or agenda.

### 10.3 Discourse Acts

In *Chapter 8* particular ‘speech acts’ or ‘discourse acts’ were identified in the literature as being typical of institutional talk: the initiating acts of **questions** and **elicitations**, **informatives** (especially **assessments**) and **directives**. Numerous examples from the data were given to show that the discourse acts performed by the trainers and DOSs are those of elicitation, questioning, evaluation and direction, and the acts performed by the trainees and teachers are those of response, acknowledgement, agreement, justification or silence. Notable differences from those common in everyday social conversations were identified in the **responses** given in the feedback sessions, in particular the withholding of second assessments by the assessors, and in the use by participants of silence as response. Again these patterns accorded with those found in institutional settings by a number of researchers.

#### **10.4 Particular features of the discourse**

In *Chapter 9* research into **lexical choice** within institutional discourse was reviewed. Such research suggests that certain politeness strategies and the use of jargon can contribute to the establishment of roles and power relationships. Again, examples of such characteristic strategies were found in the data, although the evidence was not so compelling as for other aspects of the talk, especially when the feedback sessions are compared with more formal institutional conversations.

#### **10.5 Features of institutional talk not found in the feedback session**

There are very few ways in which the feedback sessions do not conform to characteristics predicted for institutional conversations by researchers in the domain of institutional discourse. The use of jargon to intimidate or exclude is not found in the feedback sessions where its use in this way has been claimed for certain, particularly formal, institutional encounters. For these reasons the feedback sessions, especially those within the in-service context, cannot be included within the category of the more formal (and public) institutional encounters such as parliamentary debate or court room proceedings.

In addition, the presence of ‘continuers’ found in the feedback conversations were not predicted by Boden (1994). I think this can be accounted for by a recognition of the fact that the sessions are essentially one-to-one conversations, and therefore require different conventions from those in a meeting between a number of people. Even within the pre-service session there are stretches of conversation when an extended two-person exchange is taking place, albeit in the presence of others.

#### **10.6 Degree of formality**

It has been noted that both types of feedback session can be placed towards the informal end of the range of institutional encounters. In their relative degree of formality, although similar enough to be included within the same genre, differences have been



identified between the pre-service and the in-service feedback sessions. The pre-service session has features which distinguish it as being more 'formal' and less 'conversational' than the in-service session. Differences can be noted in the following areas.

- In both set of sessions the assessor represents a formal organisation: the DOS in the in-service sessions represents the Bell Educational Trust and it is through him or her that certain policies of the institution are carried out. The trainer in the pre-service sessions, however, represents two institutions: the training institution (the Bell Language School, Cambridge) and the examining board (UCLES). There is arguably more at stake for the trainees than for the teachers as the lesson and feedback session are part of the formal assessment required by the examination board. The trainees' performance determines whether they will pass the course and gain the desired qualification. This has consequences for the 'seriousness' or formality of the pre-service sessions.
- In *Section 4.2: The physical context*, it was noted that one of the features of the informal encounter is that it takes place in private rather than in public. A slight distinction in this regard can be made between the two types of session. In the pre-service session there is a small audience (which usually observes but which can and does sometimes participate): the other three trainees in the group. The conversation between the trainer and the trainee is, therefore, not a private one, as it is between DOS and teacher. This would suggest that the pre-service session is somewhat more formal than the in-service session.
- For all the feedback sessions a period was set aside for the express purpose of having a specific kind of 'meeting'. It was noted (page 78), however, that the arrangements for the pre-service are more formally constrained than for the in-service sessions, where timing is more flexible.
- For both sets of sessions there is paperwork to be brought and follow-up work to be done after the meeting. Formal records are kept on certain aspects of the 'meeting'. However, the in-service sessions seem to be less formal than the pre-service as both

participants have copies of the form that shapes the 'agenda'. In the pre-service sessions the trainer alone determines what will be discussed, and when.

- There are differences in the detail of the language used in the two sets of sessions. For example, the less formal nature of the in-service session is reflected in the slightly more frequent occurrence of *oh* compared with the pre-service sessions, and it was noted that more politeness strategies are used by the DOS when effecting criticism, resulting in a more tentative approach.

In sum, there are sufficient differences between the pre-service session and the in-service session to enable comparison as regards the degree of formality. The in-service session, while still clearly identified as institutional talk, is more informal and more closely approaches 'everyday conversation' than the pre-service session. In *Chapter 11: The feedback session: discourse, role and function*, the reasons for the differences between the two sets of feedback session will be explored in further detail.

### **10.7 The feedback session as institutional talk: conclusions**

In conclusion, there are very many characteristic features which identify the feedback session as belonging to the category of 'institutional talk', and only one or two which could possibly count against its inclusion. They are both work-orientated occasions for talk at the informal end of the range of 'institutional' encounters, with the pre-service session being demonstrably more formal than the in-service session.

I believe that the first of the three aims of the study has been achieved:

- the conversations taking place within two sets of feedback sessions have been described and analysed and features of 'institutional talk' demonstrated. The feedback sessions have been shown to contain features typical of other examples of talk at work, and differences between the sessions and informal or non-institutional conversation exemplified. I therefore feel confident that the feedback session can be seen to belong to the type of discourse described as 'talk at work'.

In the next chapters, *Chapters 11* and *12*, the second aim of the study, as detailed on page 16, is tackled.

Significant differences noted between the two types of feedback session seem to be related to the roles the participants are playing, their power relationships, and the specific function of the session as perceived by those taking part. It can be claimed that these factors influence the detail of the discourse that takes place within the encounter. It is this relationship between discourse, role and function which is explored in detail in the next part of the study.

## **PART THREE**

### **THE PARTICIPANTS' PERSPECTIVE AND CONCLUSIONS**

The analysis that was conducted in *Part Two: The Feedback session as institutional talk: Conversation Analysis* (Chapters 4-10) was etic in perspective. The data was taken from the conversations that were recorded and transcribed and analysed by me as an outside observer.

The discussion, interpretations and conclusions that make up Part Three, while drawing on evidence presented in Part Two, encompass a different set of perspectives. In particular the viewpoints of the participants themselves are given careful consideration. In addition, knowledge that I have (as an insider) of the ELT profession, and of the particular institutions, is brought to the study. This emic perspective is added to the etic perspective described in Part Two. I hope that this synthesis of viewpoints will provide a more detailed description and better reasoned explanations, and that it will also allow more meaningful conclusions to be drawn.

## CHAPTER 11: ROLE AND FUNCTION

If we accept the argument set out in *Chapter 10*, that the feedback session is a specific genre within the general category of ‘talk at work’ or ‘institutional talk’, and that the first aim of the study has been achieved, we can now turn to a more detailed examination of the relationship between the talk, the participants, and the institution.

The second aim of this study, as noted on page 16, is:

- To examine to what extent the **discourse** of the feedback session is created as a result of :
  - i) the **roles** of the participants as perceived by the participants themselves, and by others not participating in the conversation;
  - ii) the **function** of the session as perceived by the participants based on their own expectations, and/or created by the expectations of the institutions for which they work.

In order to achieve this aim I propose to take the following steps:

- to re-examine evidence from the recorded conversations described in *Chapters 5-9* in order to review features held in common by the two sets of feedback session, and in particular to highlight areas where they differ significantly;
- to investigate, by means of questionnaires and interviews, how the participants perceive their roles and the function of the feedback sessions;
- to describe how the perceptions of the participants concerning their role and the function of the session shape the discourse.

### **11.1 Methodological approach: the use of evidence from interviews and questionnaires**

In *Chapters 5 - 9* a detailed analysis of the discourse was undertaken: the way the participants co-operate to organise and manage the conversation; the employment of particular discourse acts; the choice of lexis. At each stage features characteristic of other institutional conversations were detailed and the two sets of feedback session were compared. The conclusions arising from this detailed analysis, described in *Chapter 10*, were that the two types of feedback session, although demonstrably belonging to the same genre, are notably different in some details of the discourse. The methodological perspective taken can be described as etic: the analysis represents the outside observer's point of view. A number of Conversation or Discourse Analysts would argue that such an 'objective' analysis is sufficient; that from such a study conclusions can be drawn concerning the relationship between discourse and social action.

However, as I argued in *Chapter 3: Methodology and Theoretical Framework for Analysis*, a richer description can be obtained by looking at the research question from more than one perspective; by gathering information from more than one source. I therefore now intend to switch the spotlight from the conversations themselves to the participants, to obtain an emic perspective by focusing on *their* perception of their role and of the function of the sessions. These perceptions, gathered from the interviews and questionnaires conducted with the participants, will be compared with the evidence gleaned from the analysis of their behaviour in the sessions. So, in a search for the factors that shape the discourse, a combination of both etic and emic perspectives is achieved. I hope that such a synthesis will enable me to offer explanations, not only for the features that the feedback sessions have in common (which was the main focus of *Chapter 10*), but in particular for the ways in which they differ. In this chapter (*Chapter 11*) I intend to account, in sociological terms, for the differences between the pre-service and the in-service sessions.

Evidence will be taken from the interviews and questionnaires conducted with all the participants in the study: the 9 trainers, 16 trainees, 6 Directors of Studies and 9

teachers. The data is set out in Appendix 3 (for the pre-service participants) and Appendix 4 (for the in-service participants). The questionnaires and interview questions are reproduced in full in the appendices. In Tables 1 and 8 details of the participants are given. The answers to the interview questions were recorded and summaries made (Tables 2-6 and Tables 8-13). The answers to the questionnaires are given in full (Tables 7 and 14). The responses given by the participants are taken at face-value; I am assuming that they are telling the truth as they perceive it and that they are not trying, for whatever reason, to deliberately mislead.

In the analysis that follows extracts will be taken from the data set out in Appendices 3 and 4 in order to exemplify points. It is suggested, therefore, that the Appendices be referred to in parallel with the sections that follow. This will enable an appreciation of the context from which the extracts are taken.

## **11.2 Role**

### ***11.2.1 Orientation to the setting and recognition of set roles***

One of the problems of analysis this study has had to tackle is one often raised by Conversation Analysts: “how to examine the data so as to be able to show that the parties were, with and for each other, demonstrably oriented to those aspects of who they are, and those aspects of their context, which are respectively implicated in the “social structures” which we may wish to relate to the talk” (Schegloff 1992:110). In other words, how can I (an outside observer) be sure that the conclusions I come to concerning role and orientation are in fact meaningful, and accord with the perceptions of the participants taking part in the conversations? Evidence from the questionnaires and interviews may confirm or question conclusions concerning role and discourse that I have come to after my study of the conversations.

In *Chapter 4: The participants and the context*, it was noted that the participants in the sessions are similar in terms of social status, cultural background, general education, dress, wealth and other socio-economic measures and that the only distinguishing factor is that imposed by the roles within this very narrow and temporary context - the roles of



‘assessor’ and ‘assessed’. One of the features shared by both sets of feedback session is that of the participants’ orientation to the setting and of their roles, an acceptance of their ‘place’ in the setting: as either ‘professional’ or ‘lay-person’, or more accurately ‘expert’/‘non-expert’ in the *pre-service* sessions, and ‘more expert’/‘less expert’ in the *in-service* sessions.

Further evidence is provided in the responses given by the participants in the interviews and questionnaires. Both sets of assessors see themselves as ‘doing a job of work’, as professionals within a work-oriented context. For example, when answering *Question 6: Do you feel your relationship with the trainee/teacher to be special when you are giving feedback? How would you describe the relationship?* - the trainers say (Table 6):

TR1: *I’m the trainer in charge...I’m their teacher but also a bit of a counsellor.*

TR2: *I’m a fairly new trainer.*

TR3: *I am the person with more experience in the business. I’m both trainer and judge.*

TR4: *I’m their tutor ... it’s an ‘official’ role*

TR5 refers to two roles: that of *adviser* and that of *examiner*. TR6 describes herself as a special kind of *teacher*, and TR7 calls herself a *trainer*.

The Directors of Studies give similar indications as to how they view their context-specific role, in their answers to Question 6 (Table 13):

DOS1: *as a new DOS ...*

DOS3: *I’m very conscious of being the ‘DOS’*

DOS4: *the one in charge*

DOS5: *my role as DOS.*

Those being assessed feel it is appropriate to refer to their assessors by their title or role.

The trainees make these references (see Appendix 3, Table 7):

Cath: *we’ve just changed TP tutors. The present is much more helpful ...*

Yasmin: *I like this tutor much better than last week’s.*

And Adrian, one of the teachers, makes these remarks (see Appendix 4, Table 14):

*Amy (DOS1) is a sound DOS. I have total respect for Amy as she is the total professional.*

He goes on to point out the difference in their roles:

*Last year we were fellow EFL tutors and this year she has been my DOS.*

There is therefore evidence in the data, both from the conversation analysis and from the interviews and questionnaires, that demonstrates a recognition and an acceptance of role.

### ***11.2.2 Role and power***

Furthermore, it is clear that the discourse, in both sets of feedback session, is influenced by factors associated with specific roles. In particular evidence was found, through an analysis of the talk, for:

- a recognition of legitimate behaviour appropriate to the roles, such as observing, noting, evaluating, keeping a record etc.;
- a distribution of power which is attributable to the professional roles played by the participants, and in particular, the ways in which “the more powerful participant controls and shapes the text.” (Kress 1989:49).

Plentiful evidence has been given, in *Chapters 5-7*, to suggest that such specific role-sets result in asymmetric power relations. An analysis of the data available from the recorded conversations revealed that such an imbalance of power was found to be a feature of both sets of feedback session. The conversations in the feedback sessions are shaped primarily by the assessor. The overall structure and organisation of the talk (the degree of participation, the patterns of interaction), the way the conversation is managed by means of characteristic turn-taking and topic choice and management, the conversational patterning, have all been found to be closely related to the imbalance of power between participants.

Data obtained from the participants by means of questionnaires and interviews reinforces the view that power is closely associated with role, and examples will be given in the

sections that follow. However, I also found significant differences between the pre-service sessions and the in-service sessions, which I have not yet adequately accounted for. Reasons for these differences can be suggested after studying the answers given by the participants to the questions posed in the interviews and questionnaires.

### ***11.2.3 Role and the 'knowledge gap'***

A significant factor concerns the degree of expertise, often gained by means of experience, of the different categories of participants or, as described by Heritage and Drew, a “differential distribution of knowledge, (and) rights to knowledge” (Drew and Heritage 1992:49). In the pre-service sessions the ‘knowledge gap’ between the trainers and the trainees is such that the opinion, or point of view, of the trainer is acknowledged by all participants as the most significant or authoritative one. The trainees’ ‘orientation to the problem’ does not seem to get a great deal of attention. This accords with West’s (1984) claim that, in doctor/patient encounters, the patient’s orientation to the problem is not taken into account. The analogy of the trainer as doctor can be taken further: the ‘diagnosis’ and recommendation for ‘treatment’ is made by the trainer, as reflected in these comments made by the trainers (see Appendix 3, Table 2):

TR1: *I find if you can get them to understand 'aims' then you are half way there*

TR3: *Sandra doesn't like to let go*

TR3: *David also needs to hand over more to the students*

TR5: *the points Dawn needs to focus on if she is going to get a 'B'*

TR7: *(Jill) particularly needs to work on the grammar*

TR2: *we have to let candidates know whether they are reaching the right standard*

One of the trainers makes it clear (Appendix 3, Table 5) that if there is a difference of opinion between trainer and trainee there is no question as to whose counts and becomes the ‘official’ one:

TR4: *it's basically a difference of opinion and she (the trainee, Alice) doesn't understand why what she's doing is wrong*

In their questionnaire responses the trainees did not raise the issue of their right to opinions. Instead, they mention as the hallmark of good feedback (see Appendix 3, Table 7):

Ruth: (being told) *what was wrong with my lesson*

Dawn: *what I've got to work on*

Sandra: *we need to know what went wrong*

Ruth: *being led in the right direction*

Frank: *getting good guidance.*

Jill sums it up when she says: '*I think this feedback is essential to learning how to teach properly*' - where what is 'proper' is decided by the trainer. In other words the trainees recognise and accept the authority of the trainer. They seem content to take a passive role. They expect and accept the opinions and guidance of the trainer.

By contrast the expectations of the teachers in the in-service session are very different, as evidenced by their responses to questions asked in the questionnaires (see Appendix 4, Table 14). A successful feedback session is seen as one in which the teachers are given a chance to state their views, in which their opinions are taken into account and valued by the Directors of Studies. The teachers often mention the importance of an exchange of views:

Sue: *she (DOS1) is also prepared to listen to our opinions/views*

John: *I think it was a fair exchange of views*

Anna: *feedback sessions give you another person's perspective. I also felt able to express myself.*

Donna: *I feel able to express my feelings and point of view*

Wanda: *totally able to express my feelings and Gerry (DOS5) let me do a lot of the talking.*

Clare: *it is interesting to hear different approaches ... Jackie (DOS6) is always open to suggestion.*

The last remark could have been made about the teacher by the DOS, not the other way round. It is an indication that the roles and the power relationships are much less differentiated in the in-service, compared with the pre-service, encounter.

Recognition of the need for a more balanced discussion, where the teacher has more autonomy, is echoed in comments made by the Directors of Studies. When asked how they decided which points to focus on the following answers were given (see Appendix 4, Table 9):

DOS1: *she (Sue) asked me what to focus on*

DOS1: *I asked him what he wanted me to focus on*

DOS2: *I wanted to see how he perceived the lesson*

DOS4: *to discuss together what worked for the students*

In answer to Question 4 (Appendix 4, Table 12), which concerned her aims for the session, DOS3 said: *to effect a fruitful exchange of views*.

These perceptions concerning role go a long way to explain some of the detailed differences found in the discourse of the pre-service, in comparison with the in-service, sessions. For example, in the in-service sessions I found (page 134) that the ‘test’ question is rare. Similarly, endorsements as third-turn response, commonly given by the more powerful participant to indicate approval, within institutional settings such as schools, are absent in the in-service sessions (page 190). This is because the DOS is not claiming exclusive knowledge which is not accessible to the teachers. By contrast, in the pre-service sessions the ‘knowledge gap’ is recognised as wider, and ‘test’ questions with follow-up endorsements are common.

This more equitable apportionment of power in the in-service sessions accords with the fact that response to criticism by the teachers is noticeably different from that of the trainees. I found that response in the feedback sessions can take the form of agreement/acknowledgement, silence, challenge, or justification/excuse (see 8.2: *Response*). Silence as response is much more common in the pre-service sessions than in the in-service sessions. By contrast, challenges are to be found in the discourse of the in-service sessions, where they are largely absent in the pre-service. For example, in Session A there is quite an extended ‘disagreement’, as described on page 169.

An analysis of the discourse revealed a marked difference between trainees and practising teachers in their use of self-criticism and self-praise (see *Section 8.1.2 b) Assessments*,

pages 177,181). The trainees are much less confident about the worth of their performance and, when invited to give their opinion, often take the opportunity to preempt criticism they may expect from the trainer. On the other hand, unsolicited self-assessment is much more common in the in-service than in the pre-service session; teachers are more confident and are much more likely to make positive rather than negative comments about their performance.

The comments made by the trainees and teachers in the questionnaires offer an explanation for the frequency of particular discourse acts (self-praise and self-criticism) in the two sets of feedback session. There are frequent references made by the teachers to the recognition of the good points in the lessons, and to justification of rationale, for example (see Appendix 4, Table 14):

Adrian: *she praised what was good*

John: *a chance to prove myself as a professional teacher*

Anna: *I went away feeling positive about my lesson*

Judy: *she appreciates my efforts in the classroom and feels I am doing a good job.*

Jack: *credit was given me for the things I achieved*

Donna: *it gave me a chance to rationalise and say why I did what I did*

Wanda: *I came away feeling generally happy about my teaching*

Clare: *Jackie (DOS6) is always open to suggestion.*

By contrast, the trainees tend to mention the negative points about their own performance, for example (see Appendix 3, Table 7):

Polly: *I wasn't very happy with my lesson plan*

Fran: *(I was) quite upset about my lesson*

Ruth: *I should have known exactly what was wrong*

Sandra: *(I was) clear about where I'd gone wrong*

David: *(I was) able to focus on mistakes, to reconcile faults*

Dawn: *I realised quite a lot of things weren't right*

Dina: *I know I timed it badly*

Jill: *I didn't do a very good lesson*

In sum, teachers receiving feedback in the in-service sessions expect, or you could even say demand, to make a larger contribution than the trainees in the pre-service sessions. The relationship between Directors of Studies and teachers is much more one of equals, or fellow professionals.

The evidence from the questionnaires and interviews confirms findings from the Conversation Analysis and contributes towards an explanation. For example the different relationship between teacher/DOS compared with that between trainee/trainer is remarked upon by two of the participants in the study. Richard and John are Director of Studies and teacher, respectively, in Session B. However, Richard is also a teacher trainer at the Bell School - he is TR8 in Sessions 8 and 16. John is a new teacher who has recently completed the CTEFLA course at the Bell School, where Richard was his trainer. Their remarks reflect the way they recognise that the nature of their relationship has changed from that of trainer/trainee to that of DOS/teacher (see Appendix 4, Tables 14 and 12):

John: *I feel that Richard and I have a different way of working now that we are colleagues. I see observations as my chance to prove myself as a professional teacher.*

Richard: *He (John) is doing well in his first teaching post*

#### ***11.2.4 Role, power and knowledge: conclusions***

In conclusion, there is a smaller 'knowledge gap' between participants in the in-service session as the teachers, not only the Directors of Studies, have had valuable experience in the classroom that they can draw upon. The teachers have more experience and confidence than the trainees *vis-à-vis* the person giving the feedback. They tend to see their performance in a positive rather than in a negative light. They often feel able to justify or defend their actions, even to disagree with the DOS. Although acknowledging the DOS's right to give feedback the teachers do not always seem ready to accept that their opinions are necessarily more valid than their own. As a consequence they feel much more entitled to their own opinion, even if it differs from the DOS and results in a

challenge. The roles played by the participants determine and reinforce the nature of the talk. Both parties recognise that they are closer in status and this results in less asymmetry exhibited in the way the conversation is managed. In terms of the roles played and the power balance between the participants, the in-service session, while still clearly identified as institutional talk, is closer in these respects to ‘everyday conversation’ than the pre-service session. In these respects, all the evidence from the interview/questionnaire data points to general agreement with the findings based on the Conversation Analysis.

### 11.3 Perception of the function of the feedback sessions

Next, in order to account further for detailed differences in the discourse we turn from an examination of **role** to focus on a closely related subject: the participants’ perception of the **function** of the encounter and the tasks to be achieved. An indication of the tasks or goals to which the trainers and the DOSs are oriented has been gained through the analysis of the discourse described and exemplified in *Chapters 4 - 9*. A study of the questionnaires and interviews serves to confirm these findings and provide a more detailed explanation for noted differences.

Within the general context of the interaction there seem to be expectations of what is appropriate - topics that can be discussed and the ways in which meanings can be conveyed. In *Chapter 8: Discourse Acts*, numerous examples from the data were given to show that the discourse acts performed by the trainers and DOSs are those of *elicitation, questioning, evaluation and direction*, and the acts performed by the trainees and teachers are those of *response, acknowledgement, agreement, justification or silence*.

Both sets of feedback session share these characteristics, and in doing so are typical of institutional encounters. However, an examination in detail of the use of initiating acts and their response uncovered some interesting differences between the two sets of data (see *Sections 8.1 and 8.2*). One of the most notable differences between the two types of feedback session relates to evaluation, to the class of discourse act I have referred to as



*assessments* (subdivided into criticism, compliments, self-criticism, and self-commendation - see *Section 8.1.2*). A detailed study of how the participants view the key function of evaluation can give valuable insight into how, in general, perception of function affects the detail of the discourse within any specific encounter. In the following sections - *Sections 11.3.1-11.3.4*, evidence is presented from the interviews/questionnaires in order to see if the participants' perception of evaluation accords with my interpretation, based on the analysis of the conversations.

### ***11.3.1 Evaluation***

The responses given in the interviews and questionnaires indicate that all the participants regard the feedback session as being a legitimate occasion for evaluation. This evidence reinforces that gleaned from a study of the conversations. The trainees, for example, mention (constructive) criticism as a recognised and appropriate element of feedback (see Appendix 3, Table 7):

Cath: *he gives us constructive criticism*

Fran: *the criticism was in the main constructive*

Ruth: *I would have been happy to have had some more criticism ...*

Sandra: *we need to know what went wrong*

David: *I personally never object to constructive criticism*

Naomi: *the criticism was a bit much, but good for me I suppose*

It is agreed that the criticism must be 'constructive'. While Naomi found it acceptable, Alice did not:

Alice: *too negative*

The teachers also see evaluation as an appropriate element of feedback (see Appendix 4, Table 14), though it is not mentioned as often by the teachers as by the trainees:

Adrian: *Amy evaluated the lesson fairly*

Anna: *I received constructive criticism*

Jack: *several critical comments were made ...and followed up with positive suggestions*

### 11.3.2 Positive versus negative evaluation

A detailed analysis of the two sets of conversation revealed significant differences in the *amount* of positive versus negative evaluation made in the pre-service sessions in comparison with the in-service sessions (see *Section 8.1.2 b) Assessments*). In linguistic terms, the pre-service sessions are markedly more negative than positive, in contrast to the in-service sessions which contain many more examples of positive as opposed to negative evaluation.

However, when asked in the interviews (Question 2) whether they thought the feedback they had given had been generally positive or negative, both the trainers (see Appendix 3, Table 3) and the Directors of Studies (see Appendix 4, Table 10) thought that they had given positive feedback. Only TR2, in Session 2, and TR4, in Session 4, thought the feedback they gave might have been negative in tone.

The perception of the feedback sessions as being positive, in overall feel if not in linguistic terms, is reflected in the comments made by the trainees and the teachers. Most of the sixteen trainees felt that the sessions had been successful (see Appendix 3, Table 7). The statement: *I found the session as a whole useful* was ticked by all the trainees except Alice. The statement: *I found the feedback given by the tutor on my lesson* was ticked by everyone except Alice and Fran (although Fran had found the session as a whole useful). The following comments are made (see Appendix 3, Table 7): about the sessions - *helpful, extremely useful*; and about the trainer or fellow trainees - *understanding, encouraging, clear, supportive, helpful*. A number of trainees who were not happy with their own performance in the classroom found the feedback session a positive experience - this is clear from the comments of Polly, Dawn, Dina, Jill, Alex and Naomi. Moreover, most of the trainers felt the trainees had had a positive experience. Only TR2 guessed correctly that Ruth was not happy with the feedback received on her lesson, and TR4's assessment (positive) was at variance with that of Alice (who ticked 2 and 4).

A similar pattern of response is found from the teachers (see Appendix 4, Table 14). The statement: *I found the feedback given by the DOS on my lesson useful* was ticked by all

the teachers. They are even more positive in their comments than the trainees, making such remarks about the DOSs and the experience as: *positive, very encouraging, approachable, friendly, comfortable, pleasant, helpful*. The DOSs thought they had been generally positive in their feedback and felt (correctly) that the teachers had shown a positive attitude to the feedback given. Only DOS4 thought Donna had been *a bit anxious or defensive* (an impression not confirmed by Donna's own assessment of the feedback session which was, in fact, quite positive - see Appendix 4, Table 14).

To sum up: all of the DOSs and teachers, and the majority of the trainers and trainees perceived the feedback session to be a positive experience. However, there is a discrepancy between the degree to which the **language** of assessment in the two sets of sessions can be classified as positive or negative as evidenced by an analysis of the discourse. This raises the question of what 'positive feedback' means in the different contexts and could even suggest that all or part of the methodology used in the study is flawed.

However, I feel I can resolve this apparent paradox by undertaking a more detailed examination of the responses given in the interviews, and by asking and answering these two questions:

- Why is the balance of positive and negative evaluation so different in the two sets of feedback?
- Why is the perception of the trainers so at variance with evidence afforded by an analysis of the actual discourse?

### ***11.3.3 Expectation and function***

I feel that the differences can be accounted for by:

- the contrasting **expectations** of the trainees and teachers;
- the perceptions that the trainers and Directors of Studies have concerning the main **functions** of their particular type of feedback session .

The trainees, as noted above (page 216), expect criticism; they expect to be told where they have gone wrong and what they need to do to achieve a standard which is high

enough to pass the course. One trainee, Ruth, even complains about not having received enough criticism earlier in the course. Similarly the trainers see their role as making the standards of the examining board clear, giving information about where the trainees are in relation to the standards, and doing all they can to help them reach the required 'pass' standard. They make this clear in their responses to Questions 4: *What were your aims for the feedback session?* (See Appendix 3, Table 5).

- TR1: *At this stage I want them to have good idea of where they are up to and what they have to do to pass or get a 'B' if they can.*
- TR2: *We have to let candidates know whether they are reaching the right standard and this is quite tricky if they don't seem to be making any progress.*
- TR3: *At this stage I try to pick up on major points only, unless there is a real problem - if the trainee is not making the grade.*
- TR4: *But I do have to make Alice understand why she can't deal with the students the way she does - if she doesn't improve I can't recommend a pass.*
- TR7: *Neither of these two are strong candidates so I planned to spend quite a lot of time going over some of the basics.*

Insight into how the trainers see their role is also gained from their answers to Question 6 (see Appendix 3, Table 6):

- TR1: *I know what they need to do well in the course and I am the person who can help them succeed.*
- TR2: *There's quite a lot of pressure to make sure the trainees know where they stand so they can't say afterwards that they didn't know they were failing.*
- TR3: *I know what they need to do to pass*
- TR4: *We have to be quite up-front about how they are doing as we are accountable to the scheme*
- TR5: *At the end of the day it's my opinion that counts towards them passing or failing.*
- TR8: *My job is to give them as much professional help as possible. To give them what they need to succeed and get value for their money.*

In the pre-service sessions, therefore, both the trainers and the trainees seem to agree about the major function of feedback. It is for the trainer to give clear and honest evaluation or assessment to the trainees, and suggestions for improvement, so that they can reach a stated standard in order to pass the course (or gain an 'A' or a 'B'). Trainees might also feel that as evaluation is one of the stated aims of the feedback session the very act of talking about the lessons is beneficial and can be viewed as 'positive', even if the criticism is largely negative in that it focuses on weaknesses rather than strengths.

By contrast, I believe that evidence from the responses given by the Directors of Studies and the teachers in the in-service feedback sessions points to the fact that they see the main function of feedback somewhat differently. These comments from the teachers (see Appendix 4, Table 14) give an indication of their perception of the purpose of the feedback session:

Sue: *She (DOS1) gave me some good ideas which I will use the next time I do this lesson. She's prepared to listen to our opinions.*

Adrian: *Amy was aware of what I'm like as a teacher.*

John: *(It was) a fair exchange of views*

Anna: *The points raised will be helpful for future teaching. ... make you think about points you otherwise wouldn't have thought about.*

Judy: *Rosie has a lot of fresh ideas. We had a chance to talk as fellow professionals. She appreciates my efforts in the classroom.*

Jack: *Credit was given me for things I achieved in the lesson*

Donna: *It gave me a chance to rationalise and say why I did what I did.*

Wanda: *Gerry let me do a lot of the talking which helped me clearly to see the faults and how to change them, as well as the good.*

The teachers are looking for ways to help them improve their teaching, but on their own terms - if it fits in with their own teaching style, and with what they consider to be good teaching. In particular they seem to be seeking validation of the fact that in some ways they are colleagues of a similar standing, working together within the same institutional

setting. They like to have suggestions and new ideas but only ones they can take or leave as they wish. They have no absolute standard to meet; there is no pass or fail grade as on the pre-service course. They may respect the DOS's view but also have their own ideas and standards based on self-reflection and confidence in their own worth. In sum, the teachers, particularly the more experienced ones, often see the encounter as a two-way process - an exchange of views between fellow professionals in which their experience and opinions count.

If we turn to the Directors of Studies for clues as to what they see the main function of the sessions to be we find these comments in response to Question 1: *How did you decide which points to focus on?* (see Appendix 4, Table 9):

DOS2: *I wanted to see how he (John) perceived the lesson.*

DOS2: *I wanted to focus on the good points as Anna is a new teacher and needs some support.*

DOS3: *What Judy is doing in the light of the fact that the students are all Japanese.*

And when responding to Questions 4 and 5 which were concerned with their aims for the session (see Appendix 4, Table 12):

DOS1: *I wanted to make Sue feel confident about what she's doing. With support (she) will continue to improve.*

DOS1: *I'd like him (Adrian) to feel he has my support.*

DOS2: *I was aiming to let John know I thought his lesson was fine*

DOS2: *I hope I was positive enough to make her (Anna) feel more confident with her class till the end of the course.*

DOS3: *to give support to Judy with her group of all Japanese*

DOS4: *I was trying to help John get to grips with this group of Thai students.*

DOS4: *My aim with Donna was to make her feel good about her lesson*

DOS5: *I wanted to appear supportive*

DOS6: *to be supportive to Clare*

It would seem that the Director of Studies' perception is that the main function of the feedback session is to offer **support** - a word that arises again and again - to the teachers for whom they are responsible. They want them to feel good about their lessons, and themselves as teachers, to provide confirmation that they are fellow professionals. Of secondary importance, but linked, is their wish to help the teachers (especially those who are weak and/or inexperienced) deal with the necessary practicalities of coping with a particular group of students until the end of the course.

Comments made in response to Question 6 which concerned their relationship with the teachers provide further evidence (see Appendix 4, Table 13):

DOS1: *I think that my main role is to support the teachers and I have to do that at the same time as developing them as teachers.*

DOS2: *you don't want to destroy a weak teacher's confidence - they have to be supported till the end of the course for the students' sake.*

DOS3: *my job is to make sure that overall on the course the academic programme is as good as it can be*

DOS4: *I'm obviously keen to help my teachers do the best they can for the students.*

DOS5: *I see my main role as supporting the teachers*

DOS6: *to keep the teacher well-motivated and feeling supported and at the same time making sure that the classes are good and that the children and their parents are happy*

It is understandable that the Directors of Studies, who are responsible to the students (and their parents) for the academic programme, want to maintain or raise their teachers' morale, and to increase their motivation so that they continue to do a good job in the classroom. It is not incumbent upon them to be totally honest about the standard of the lesson and clearly, to judge by their comments and their behaviour in the sessions, they do not feel it helpful to give negative assessment as to do so would lower morale, and perhaps cause defensiveness in the teachers. As DOS1 comments (see Appendix 4, Table 10), *being negative would be counter-productive*. DOS4 notes: *Donna can be quite defensive so it's best to be positive as much as possible*, and DOS6 admits she

was positive: *perhaps a bit too much. I think I'm rather afraid of upsetting teachers sometimes.*

A number of the Directors of Studies mention the fact that the teachers may not receive negative criticism well. In addition to the remarks mentioned above, DOS1 comments that Sue *can be a bit resistant at times*. DOS6 said that Clare's attitude was positive *but then I didn't make any critical comments*. Some of the less experienced Directors of Studies are not totally confident or sure of their authority. DOS4 cites the checklist as being useful when deciding on her aims for the session: *I was anxious to get through the checklist so I would have a good record for the files*. DOS5 admits his insecurity with one of the other teachers: *it was a lot more difficult with Lynne 'cos I think she thinks she should be DOS and isn't really interested in anything I have to say*. In this way the new DOSs may lack confidence and feel they lack authority. By contrast, this is seldom true of new trainers whose trainees are almost invariably new to the training centre, the trainers and to each other.

Teachers and Directors of Studies, therefore, have complementary expectations of the feedback session. The teachers expect to have confirmation that they are doing a good job of work, and some ideas for activities they can try in the classroom. Above all they hope for, and appreciate, a chance to put their point of view and to have a sympathetic listener. The Directors of Studies feel that the main purpose of the sessions is to provide support to the teachers. By praising good practice they hope to motivate teachers to continue to provide the students with good lessons. Most Directors of Studies see negative evaluation as demotivating and so avoid it where possible. They are wary of a defensive reaction to overt criticism by experienced teachers. With less experienced and/or less competent teachers they feel that negative evaluation would be demotivating. In these cases they see as their first duty the bolstering of the teacher's confidence so that s/he is able to do a reasonably competent job until the end of the course.

How the Directors of Studies see the main function of the feedback session differs markedly from that of the trainers on the pre-service course. These different perceptions and motivations have important consequences for the discourse. For example, as noted in



*Section 9.1.2: The use of on-record language and particular politeness strategies within the feedback session*, in addition to the balance of positive and negative evaluation there are also differences in the way negative assessments are made. Generally, the Directors of Studies use much more indirect, tentative language than the trainers. They seem less ‘authoritarian’, and perhaps at times less confident, in their manner of expression.

One important consequence to note is that the way the lessons are discussed in the two sets of sessions does not necessarily reflect the quality of the lessons observed. For example, when I asked Amy (DOS1) how she would grade the lesson given by Sue (Feedback Session A) she told me that she would rate it as a bare pass at Certificate level. In other words Sue’s lesson, although she is a practising teacher, is of a standard no higher than many of those given by the trainees as part of their pre-service training. Similarly Richard (DOS2) felt that the lesson given by Anna (In-service Session G) was not of a very high standard and one he would not have passed if Anna had been on a pre-service course. As Anna is a new teacher we might expect the DOS to treat her more like a trainee, especially as he comments: *She (Anna) is more like a trainee than a teacher as she’s so new* (Table 12). However, the language used by Amy and Richard when giving feedback to these teachers is very different from that used by the trainers giving feedback to trainees who gave poor lessons.

#### ***11.3.4 A direct comparison between pre-course and in-course sessions conducted by the same assessor***

It is particularly interesting to compare the way in which Richard conducts the pre-service and the in-service sessions. Richard is TR8 in Sessions 8 and 19, and DOS2 in Sessions B and G. The two sets of sessions took place two years apart. An analysis of the discourse in all four sessions shows them to be typical of their type, i.e. Sessions 8 and 9 are typical of pre-service sessions and Sessions B and G are typical of in-service sessions. Richard’s responses in the two interviews conducted were also characteristic of fellow trainers and Directors of Studies respectively.

When asked about the focus and aims for feedback with his two trainees in the pre-service session, Naomi and Graham, Richard comments as follows (see Appendix 3).

*Naomi is a weak pass at the moment - I needed to point out the way the structure of the lesson could have been improved - it was not well-planned. I aimed to help Naomi see why her lack of planning resulted in a rather confused lesson and I think I was fairly successful in helping her, though it took a long time sorting things out. I hope I was positive, though there were points about the structure of the lesson I had to make.*

*Graham is basically sound and will pass easily so there were just small points to make to do with instructions. I wanted to point out a few small additions but could be positive as there were no real problems. The session with Graham was fine as he is quite self-aware and took on suggestions cheerfully.*

It would seem that Naomi is a weak teacher and Graham is quite good. With both trainees Richard's comments refer to whether they will 'pass' and how he plans to address specific points. When asked about his relationship with the trainees Richard says: *my job is to give them as much professional help as possible. To give them what they need to succeed and get value for their money. I'm also responsible to the Bell to keep up the standards of the course and to make sure we make proper recommendations to UCLES about grades - not to get carried away because we like the people and want them to pass.*

Contrast these responses with those Richard makes about the two practising teachers in the in-service sessions (see Appendix 4):

*I wanted to focus on the good points as Anna is a new teacher and needs some support. I tried to be very positive because she needs encouragement. I wanted to give Anna confidence as she is not doing too well with what is quite a difficult class.*

*I hope I was positive enough to make her feel more confident with her class till the end of the course. She received feedback in a very positive way - she is more like a trainee than a teacher as she's so new. She's very anxious for feedback.*

*John is doing well so I didn't need to focus on anything in particular - I wanted to see how he perceived the lesson. I was positive as it was a good lesson and I was aiming to let John know I thought his lesson was fine and that he is doing well in his first teaching*

*post with Bell. The session went as planned - John was confident and easy to talk to, he is confident enough to be able to take suggestions quite well.*

Again there is one weak and one strong teacher but the way Richard chooses to handle the feedback is different from the way he tackled a similar situation in the pre-service session. With the practising teacher who is weak he aims to focus on the positive elements of the lesson, to provide encouragement to help her with her difficult class. This attitude is confirmed when Richard discusses his relationship with the teachers:

*I feel that I am there to support and make sure that the teachers - especially new ones like John and Anna are doing a good enough job. In a way our first priority is the students and we have to make sure the teachers do as good a job as possible. At the same time you don't want to destroy a weak teacher's confidence - they have to be supported till the end of the course for the students' sake.*

Of particular note is the difference in approach when dealing with Naomi and Anna, who are both weak teachers. With Naomi, Richard felt the need to point out her weaknesses and tell her in which ways she was not reaching the required standards. With Anna, on the other hand, the feedback was much more positive as Richard wanted to encourage her to continue with her difficult class. Richard thought that his feedback was 'positive' in both the pre-service and in-service sessions. In fact, an analysis of the discourse reveals that in the pre-service session, as with all the pre-service sessions, the majority of the evaluation can be categorised as 'negative' while the in-service session was typical of its type - the majority of the evaluation was 'positive'.

The different attitude of Richard to the sessions, depending on whether he is wearing his trainer or DOS hat, is echoed in the views and responses of the trainees and teachers. All four felt that their feedback session was useful.

About the pre-service session -

**Naomi** reported that during the session she felt *quite good at first, not so happy later*.

After the session she felt *a bit down, the criticism was a bit much, but good for me I suppose*.

**Graham** reported feeling *fine* during the session and *quite good* afterwards. He thought he had received *lots of useful tips*.

About the in-service session -

**Anna** thought that *the points raised during the feedback session will be very helpful for future teaching. I received constructive criticism which meant I went away feeling positive about my lesson but having learnt how I could improve*. She also commented that *feedback sessions give you another person's perspective and make you think about points you wouldn't otherwise have thought of. I also felt able to express myself*.

**John** said that during the session he felt *fine*. *I think it was a fair exchange of views*. Afterwards he also said he felt *fine* and went on to say: *I feel that Richard and I have a different way of working now we are colleagues. I see observation as my chance to prove myself as a professional teacher*.

The comments made by those being assessed reflected the balance of positive and negative evaluation: Naomi commented on the fact that the feedback was negative - *the criticism was a bit much, but good for me I suppose*, while Anna noted that it was positive - *I received constructive criticism which meant I went away feeling positive about my lesson*.

### **11.3.5 Perception of function: conclusions**

In conclusion, we can answer the question posed above:

- Why is the balance of positive and negative evaluation so different in the two sets of feedback?

The discourse of the two types of feedback session reflects the expectations of the participants, and in particular the way in which the assessor perceives his or her role in relation to the purpose or function of the specific feedback session - it is not 'all-purpose feedback speak'. This accounts for the fact that the same person may react differently when assessing a similar standard of lesson, depending on the situation. The

trainees/trainers can and often do receive a different type of evaluation, couched in very different language - the discourse is 'selected' by the assessor to suit the purpose.

I would now like to suggest an answer to the second question posed above:

- Why is the perception of the trainers so at variance with evidence afforded by an analysis of the actual discourse?

Why is it that the emic interpretation seems to be at odds with the etic interpretation? As already noted, both the trainers (with one or two reservations) and the Directors of Studies felt that they had given positive feedback. An examination of the discourse confirms the perception of the Directors of Studies but does not accord with that of the trainers: in fact, most of the evaluation in the pre-service sessions can be categorised as negative. However, although there is evidence to show that trainers are anxious to be unambiguous in their criticism, it is not bald-on record but 'softened' by a range of politeness strategies. Assessors also use techniques such as elicitation in order to 'co-implicate' the trainee in the negative evaluation, and often effect criticism by making suggestions and giving advice. As a result, although linguistically the discourse can be described as *negative*, the rapport established between the assessor and trainees is such that most participants, when asked, feel that the trainer is *understanding* and *encouraging*, that feedback is positive in tone, and that the experience has been useful. For example, one of the trainees, David, describes the session as taking place *in a relaxed atmosphere* (see Appendix 3, Table 7) and one of the teachers, Adrian, mentions that *a friendly working relationship has been established* (see Appendix 4, Table 14).

In brief, the perception of the feedback session as 'positive' is a result of the participants' **expectations** (criticism), and by the establishment of **rapport** through skilful use of politeness strategies by (most of) the trainers. As with the trainee/trainer sessions the feedback sessions between DOSs and teachers are viewed as successful if they meet the **expectations** (an exchange of views) related to the roles of those taking part and the purpose of the session, and if there is a **good personal relationship** established.

#### 11.4 Discourse, role and function: conclusions

Based on evidence from an analysis of both the discourse and the interview and questionnaire data, evidence which at first seemed in some respects to be contradictory, a number of reasoned explanations have been presented to account for the detailed differences found between the pre-service and the in-service feedback sessions.

Factors were listed in *Chapter 10* that serve to identify the pre-service session as being more formal than the in-service encounter - a degree of formality that is reflected in the discourse.

- In both sets of sessions the assessor represents a formal organisation: the DOS in the in-service sessions represents the Bell Educational Trust. The trainer in the pre-service sessions, however, represents two institutions: the training institution (the Bell Language School, Cambridge) and the examining board (UCLES).
- One of the features of the informal encounter is that it takes place in private rather than in public. A slight distinction in this regard can be made between the two types of session. In the pre-service session there is a small audience, while the in-service session is 'one-to-one'.
- The arrangements for the pre-service are more formally constrained than for the in-service sessions, where timing is more flexible.
- Formal records are kept on certain aspects of the 'meeting'. However, the in-service sessions seem to be less formal than the pre-service as both participants have copies of the form that shapes the 'agenda'.

Although these factors undoubtedly make a contribution, my thesis is as follows:

- The differences in the **discourse** found in the two sets of feedback session stem primarily and fundamentally from how the participants, in particular the assessors, perceive their **roles**, and what they see as the central **purpose** of the session in question.

To summarise the rationale behind this thesis:

The trainers have a great deal of experience of this type of teaching in comparison with the trainees who usually have none. The relationship is very much one of the ‘expert’ and the ‘beginner’ and these roles are recognised and accepted as valid. The type of evaluation received is expected by the trainee, and provided the rapport with the trainer is good, it is generally recognised as helpful.

The trainers on the short, pre-service course are anxious to leave the candidates in no doubt as to the standard of the lesson - they see their role as ensuring that the criteria set by the examining board are met, in a set period of time, in order for the trainees to achieve a pass. The trainers are obliged by the examination board to let the trainees know if they are not achieving these criteria.

On the other hand, the teachers being given feedback by the DOS have no such external criteria to meet. They are part of a teaching team committed to teaching a group of students to the end of the course. The DOSs see their main role as that of ‘supporter’ rather than assessor. They see the central purpose of feedback, especially in the short-term, as that of increasing the teacher’s confidence and self-esteem, and of identifying areas where help can be offered. They are usually anxious not to upset the teacher by too harsh an evaluation - the last thing a DOS wants is for a member of his or her team to become resentful and demotivated. Although DOSs also see their role as helping the teachers to reflect on performance, to improve their knowledge and skills, this is often seen as a more gradual, long-term process.

In the next chapter, *Chapter 12: Talk and the institution*, I discuss how the assessors’ perceptions and performance of role and function, as identified in *Chapter 11*, are influenced by the institutions within which the feedback sessions take place, and how, in a reciprocal manner, the resulting talk has consequences for the institutions.

## CHAPTER 12: TALK AND THE INSTITUTION

In *Chapter 11* (*Section 11.4*), I argued that detailed differences in the discourse of the two sets of feedback session are to a large extent determined by the expectations of the participants and by how the assessors interpret their role and the central function(s) of specific encounters. In doing so I believe I have achieved, in part, the second main aim of this study - the parts underlined.

- To examine to what extent the **discourse** of the feedback session is created as a result of :
  - i) the **roles** of the participants as perceived by the participants themselves, and by others not participating in the conversation;
  - ii) the **function** of the session as perceived by the participants based on their own expectations, and/or created by the expectations of the institutions for which they work.

In *Chapter 10*, I have already established that the feedback sessions belong to a genre which can be characterised by the institutional nature of its discourse. I have also described how the trainers and Directors of Studies are employed by certain institutions: the training or teaching institution and, in the case of the pre-service training, the examinations board. Throughout the study evidence has been presented to support the claim that the conversations in the feedback sessions are shaped primarily by the assessor, or the person representing the institution.

*Chapter 12* has two parts, both of which describe a particular aspect of the relationship between the institution and the discourse. The first, and longer, part (12.1) deals with the influence of the institution(s) on the discourse. The second part (12.2) focuses on the reciprocal influence of the discourse on the institution.

### 12.1 The influence of the institution on discourse

In the first part of this chapter, *Section 12.1*, I address those aspects of the second aim of the study not dealt with in *Chapter 11* - the parts underlined below:



- To examine to what extent the **discourse** of the feedback session is created as a result of :
  - i) the **roles** of the participants as perceived by the participants themselves, and by others not participating in the conversation;
  - ii) the **function** of the session as perceived by the participants based on their own expectations, and/or created by the expectations of the institutions for which they work.

I intend to investigate the influence of the institution(s) on the views, values and language of the participants, and in particular on those of the assessors. This examination will draw evidence from the analysis of discourse detailed in *Chapters 5 - 9*, and from the interviews and questionnaires conducted with the participants. Before focusing on the feedback session itself there will be a short review of the literature concerned with the influence of the institution on behaviour, and especially on the language used within specific types of encounters. Attention will be paid, in particular, to the work of Kress (1989, 1990) on genre, and that of Boden (1994) and Drew and Heritage (1992) on institutional discourse.

### ***12.1.1 The influence of institution: a review of the literature***

#### **Nature of the institution**

Kress in a discussion about the nature of genre and its relationship to institutions takes a broad definition of institution. He maintains that institutions are instrumental in creating the type of talk found in any text which can be identified as generic and that all texts or genres are “the result of processes of social production” (Kress 1990:4).

Boden (1994) in her study of talk within the business context, *The Business of Talk*, utilises a narrower definition of institution as being, for her purposes, synonymous with the organisation or business. She describes how participants bring to business encounters their own perspectives, goals and agendas and that it is the organisation that most influences these views and aims.

### **Power and the institution**

One of the main themes in Boden's book *The Business of Talk* (1994) is that an organisation or institution manages key aspects of its work by setting up asymmetric power relations which in turn influence the discourse within encounters.

Kress agrees that institutions create particular power relationships through hierarchical structures. However, he claims that two kinds of power are to be found within institutions. The first is "the power of the powerful which is usually expressed in the existing hierarchical structures" (Kress 1990:7) and the second is "the power of groups and individuals within groups not to conform to the expectations that are generated by the structures that the powerful have set up" (Kress 1990:7).

### **Knowledge and the institution**

Closely associated with institutional power is the degree of knowledge any individual within an institution possesses - as the adage goes: 'knowledge is power'. Kress claims that "knowledge in any social domain is always organised from the point of view of a particular institution" (Kress 1990:4). As a consequence particular genres, such as the feedback session, are not created anew each time but determined by people with existing relevant knowledge "acting *both* within the bounds of their social history *and* the constraints of particular contexts" (Kress 1990:4).

### **The institution and discourse**

Kress takes the argument further. Not only is knowledge passed on by institutions but the way such knowledge is expressed through language becomes institutionalised: "genres have specifiable linguistic characteristics which are neither fully determined nor largely under the control of individual speakers" (Kress 1990:4). Drew and Heritage agree when they point out, in their introduction to a collection of articles entitled *Talk at Work*, that conversations within the work context often contain standard sequences which are related to the specific institutional function of the encounter.

Philips provides further support for this view by suggesting that "there is more routinization in the interactional construction of social context and meaning than is

presently recognised” (Philips 1992:312). She claims that speakers commonly produce stretches of spoken language within particular institutional contexts that participants in the conversation may assume to be new and spontaneous. However, they may be an exact or nearly exact repetition of some or all aspects of speech from a previous conversation. In her examination of spoken language within a court of law Philips found that three out of the nine judges had “highly routinized discourse formats” (Philips 1992:319), so that each judge when addressing different defendants used the same words and the same sequential structure each time he carried out a particular procedure. Even the other six had “a routine discourse format for handling the procedure in that they tended to cover the same substantive issues in basically the same order each time” (Philips 1992:319).

To summarise the findings from the literature: the influence of the institution on discourse can be described in terms of the nature and relationships of the *institution*, *power*, *knowledge* and *language*. In the next section (*Section 12.1.2*) I shall present evidence, under these headings, to show that the discourse in the feedback session is influenced by the institutions within which it operates.

### ***12.1.2 The influence of the institution on the discourse of the feedback session***

#### **The nature of the institution**

In terms of the feedback session ‘institution’ can be defined in the narrow sense of the school, training institute and examining board, or in the broader sense of the ‘English language teaching profession’. Although my main aim is to investigate how the institutions employing the assessors have consequences for the discourse, I feel that influences brought to bear by the wider institution of the profession may also be significant.

If we accept Kress’s (Kress 1990:4) claim that institutions are instrumental in creating the type of talk found in any text which can be identified as generic, and if my argument is accepted that the feedback session is a genre within the category of talk at work (see *Chapter 10*), then we would expect the feedback session to be influenced by the institution(s) within which it operates.

The interviews can provide evidence as to whether the assessors are aware of the expectations of the institutions, and an indication as to how they react to these influences.

All of the trainers express their awareness of the responsibility they have to the examination board concerning the grading of the trainees, and many to the fact that they have to let the trainees know whether they are at the required standard . What the trainers do in the sessions is determined by their need to help the trainees meet the requirements of the institution. The following comments exemplify this awareness (see Appendix 3, Tables 2, 3 and 5).

TR5: *I aim to focus on the points Dawn needs to focus on if she is going to get a 'B'.*

TR7: *My aim is to cover the points she (Jill) needs to get right before she can be sure of passing.*

TR4: *She's got to take those points on board if she is going to pass.*

TR1: *At this stage I want them to have good idea of where they are up to and what they have to do to pass or get a 'B' if they can.*

Some of the trainers express this obligation to the examination board and the pressure it puts on them to conduct the session in a certain way (see Appendix 3, Table 5):

TR2: *We have to let candidates know whether they are reaching the right standard  
As a fairly new trainer I am conscious that I have to get a lot across in a very short time. There's quite a lot of pressure to make sure the trainees know where they stand so they can't say afterwards that they didn't know they were failing.*

TR4: *We have to be quite up-front about how they are doing as we are accountable to the scheme - to be objective. So it's an 'official' role.*

And one of the trainers mentions the influence of both institutions for which he works:

TR8: *I'm responsible to the Bell to keep up the standards of the course and to make sure we make proper recommendations to UCLES about grades*

The Directors of Studies also show awareness of what is expected of them by the institution, although for them the institutional pressures are different. They do not have to accommodate an examinations board. They are, however, accountable to the clients (the student and parents) in a way that the trainers are not. The students in the pre-service teacher training course do not pay for the lessons given by the trainees so the trainers have no formal obligation to them.

These comments give an indication of the way the DOSs are influenced by the expectations of the institution - the school and its clients (see Appendix 4, Tables 13 and 12):

DOS3 (Rosie): *My job is to make sure that overall on the course the academic programme is as good as it can be.*

DOS2 (Richard): *I was aiming to let John know I thought his lesson was fine and that he is doing well in his first teaching post with Bell.*

DOS1(Amy): *I think that my main role is to support the teachers and I have to do that at the same time as developing them as teachers.*

DOS2 (Richard): *In a way our first priority is the students and we have to make sure the teachers do as good a job as possible.*

DOS4 (Sonya): *I'm obviously keen to help my teachers do the best they can for the students.*

DOS6 (Jackie): *Making sure that the classes are good and that the children and their parents are happy.*

DOS5 (Gerry) sums up the responsibility felt by the Directors of Studies to the institution and to 'their' teachers (see Appendix 4, Table 13):

DOS5 (Gerry): *I see my main role as supporting the teachers and making sure they are doing everything Bell expects them to do.*

Boden (1994) maintains that participants bring their own 'agenda' to institutional encounters. I support this view and indeed take it one step further in claiming that the assessors bring different agendas to different types of feedback session depending on their specific purpose (see *Sections 11.3 - 11.4*). In this part of the study I would like to probe further into whether, and to what extent, these specific agendas are determined by the institution, and whether the roles the assessors play are defined and authorised by the institution. What evidence do we have for believing that the way the assessors behave in the session is based on the expectations created by the institutions for which they work - expectations either formally or informally expressed?

There is certainly evidence that topic areas considered appropriate are prescribed by the institution(s), by means of documents and checklists. On the pre-service course the examinations board provides detailed documentation which the assessors have to fill in on each candidate. Included among this is a list of criteria - elements that each trainee must demonstrate in lessons in order to achieve a pass in the practical element of the course. These areas are mentioned - *skills teaching, grammar presentation* etc.- in the feedback sessions. In these ways the institution, the examinations board, exerts its influence on what is discussed within the sessions.

In the in-service sessions I have already noted, in *Section 4.4.2*, that, in common with many other institutional encounters, paperwork is brought to the meeting and follow-up work done. The institution (the school) requires that formal records are kept on certain aspects of the observation and feedback sessions. Clearly this requirement influences the way the Directors of Studies conduct the sessions. Indeed, certain Directors of Studies make reference to these institutional documents (see Appendix 4, Tables 9 and 12):

DOS1 (Amy): *We also had the feedback form as a checklist.*

DOS4 (Sonya): *My aim was to go through the checklist. As a new DOS I was anxious to get through the checklist so I would have a good record for the files.*

## Power

It is a common finding in the literature that institutions influence the behaviour of participants and the consequent discourse within encounters by means of its inherent power structure. It is to be expected, therefore, that the discourse of the feedback session, in common with other institutional encounters, is so influenced. Any genre which is defined by its institutional nature is *per se* influenced by characteristic asymmetric power relationships. I have already shown how a distinguishing feature of the feedback session is the imbalance of power afforded by the institution, which in turn has significant consequences for the talk (see *Section 4.1.2*). I have also indicated in *Chapter 11.2.2*, that the assessors are aware of the power their institutional positions afford them.

Kress (1990:7) claims that institutions create particular power relationships through hierarchical structures. Information about the hierarchical structure of the institutional context of the feedback sessions, to add to the previous analysis of the participants' behaviour and attitudes, will help determine whether these aspects of power are likely to influence the discourse within the encounters.

There is a well-defined hierarchy within the teacher training institution, the school and the examinations board. Within the teacher training institute the trainers are responsible to a Head of Studies, who in turn reports to a Head of Teacher Training. The Head of Teacher Training is responsible to the Board of Management and ultimately to the Board of Governors. A similar hierarchy is in place within the school: the Director of Studies is a member of a course management team which is responsible to a central Academic Manager. This person is responsible to the Head of Department who in turn reports to the Board of Management and the Board of Governors. At each stage quality standards are set and appraisals conducted. The behaviour of all the assessors is therefore carefully monitored and assessed by others in the institutions for which they work. The trainer's performance is also monitored by the examinations board by means of external assessors, chief assessors and an executive board.

The first type of power described by Kress (1990:7), as expressed in the existing hierarchical structures, certainly seems to be in place within the institutions governing both sets of feedback session. However, there is less evidence within the feedback sessions for his second type of power: the power of people not to conform to the expectations generated by hierarchical structures (Kress 1990:7). On the whole participants seem to conform to institutional expectations, both in terms of their behaviour and their attitudes as expressed in the interviews and questionnaires. The institutional roles, and the power that accompanies them, are usually taken for granted even if the situation is remarked upon, as Adrian does when commenting about his changed relationship with Amy (see page 214). Even dissidence, in some ways, comes to be institutionalised. The institution can define areas of disagreement by means of client/employee satisfaction/complaints procedures. For example, all trainees and teachers studying or working on Bell courses are asked to fill in a questionnaire asking how they feel they have been served by the institution, and asking for suggestions for improvement. By such means even the language in which dissidence is expressed can be influenced by the institution.

Occasionally, although overt challenges to power are rare, there can still be some element of jockeying for position in the establishment and authority of role. For example, a new DOS with experienced teachers who have worked for the institution before may feel at a disadvantage and may not feel as powerful as someone with more experience. He or she may suspect or fear a reluctance of the part of the teachers to accept his or her authority. Gerry (DOS5) mentioned his perceived lack of authority with one of the teachers (page 228). However, there is no evidence in the discourse of either sets of feedback session for non-acceptance of the hierarchical power structure exerted by the institutions, and plenty of evidence for conformity.

## Knowledge

There are two types of knowledge that are brought to bear in the feedback sessions, both of which are influenced by the institution:

- The first type of knowledge is that concerning the **content matter** of the discussion: *teaching* and *students*. The link between power, knowledge and discourse has been



explored in *Section 11.2.3*. and I have already described how there is a knowledge gap between the assessors and the trainees/teachers.

- The second type of knowledge relates to **customs, procedures and protocol**; knowledge of institutional expectations. The extent to which participants, particularly in the in-service encounters, are ‘speaking the same language’ depends on the special culture with which they are both familiar. In the in-service session one might expect the conversation to be different if either the assessor or the teacher is new to the school, and has less inside knowledge based on past experience within the institution. This would be especially true if the Director of Studies is from outside the organisation and the teacher has worked in previous years for the Bell, as is in fact the case with Directors of Studies 5 and 6 - Gerry and Jackie. The teacher could be disconcerted by, or resentful of, the new Director of Studies who does things differently. However, there is no evidence from the discourse or from the questionnaires and interviews to suggest that new Directors of Studies are not fitting in with the expectations of teachers familiar with the way feedback sessions are normally run. I believe that the reason for this is that the behaviour of the new assessors is strongly influenced both by the institutions for which they work and by the wider institution of the profession. The way this influence is exerted is described in *Sections 12.1.3-4*, below.

### **Discourse**

Finally, evidence for institutionalisation within the feedback session can be found from a study of the discourse itself.

As detailed in *Chapter 5*, all of the feedback sessions in the study have a certain shape or structure typical of their type. They can be identified by certain types of sequences and they contain recurring patterns, or routinised language. For example, there are standard ways of opening and closing the conversations. In all the sessions the assessor begins the conversation by introducing the main topic - the lesson. The next routine step is for the assessor to ask the person who gave the lesson to give their opinion. Often the word ‘*feel*’ or ‘*feeling*’ is used in this opening utterance. Such routine behaviour points to the fact that assessors have similar set ideas of how such feedback sessions should be

conducted, ideas which I believe are inculcated by the institution. Mechanisms whereby this institutionalisation takes place are suggested in *Sections 12.1.3-4*, below.

Not only do the assessors behave in a way similar to one another, they also show a remarkable degree of consistency in the way they conduct their sessions. There is evidence similar to that found by Philips (1992): most of the ‘professionals’ use the same sequential structure in each of their sessions; they cover the same major issues in basically the same order each time. Some of the assessors even use exactly or nearly exactly the same words to effect certain routine procedures. For example, as noted in *Section 7.1.2: Openings and closings in the feedback session*, DOS1 starts her two sessions, which took place on different days and with different teachers, by using almost exactly the same words:

Session A

*So, how did you feel the lesson went?*

Session E

*OK, how did you feel that the lesson went?*

Not only is there evidence for the choice of particular sequences and discourse acts. There is also evidence from the conversation analysis for the influence of the institution on the response to particular discourse acts. For example, as described in *Section 8.1.2*, compliments in the feedback sessions are rarely responded to by thanking in the in-service encounters, and never in the pre-service sessions. Similarly, the response to self-criticism in both sets of data is the reverse of that suggested by research conducted into social conversations. Although acknowledgement and agreement would seem to be dispreferred responses they are, in fact, much more common than disagreement. These are examples of where the institutional nature of the encounters has influenced the expectations as to what is appropriate behaviour.

In sum; in order to assess the influence of the institution(s) on the way assessors conduct the feedback sessions, evidence has been presented from a number of sources: from the

analysis of the conversations undertaken earlier in the study in *Chapters 5 - 9*; from the responses given in the interviews; from information about the structures of the institutions in question. This evidence points clearly to the following:

- the discourse of the feedback session is created as a result of the perception the assessors have concerning their role and the function of the session. And these perceptions are strongly influenced by the expectations of the institutions for which they work.

In the next section I examine how institutions exert this influence.

### ***12.1.3 Ways in which knowledge and practice is passed on by ELT institutions***

If we accept the evidence for institutional influence as set out in *Section 12.1.2*, then it is also of interest to examine the mechanisms whereby knowledge and practice is passed on by educational/examining institutions to the individual trainer and then to trainees/teachers, and to see whether evidence exists for such transmission in the case of the assessors in the feedback sessions.

In the UK there is increasing attention being paid to the way trainers of language teachers are themselves trained. In 1995 a symposium was held at the University of Edinburgh on the topic of *Learning to Train*, and in his introduction to the collected papers of the symposium McGrath states that “the need for *trainer* training only surfaced as an issue in the mid-1970s” (McGrath 1997:vii). He goes on to outline the influences on the training of ELT trainers in the UK since this time.

One of the first was a series of **conferences** organised by trainers on the Diploma (then run by the Royal Society of Arts, since taken over by UCLES), a flavour of which can be gained from Davis and Worley’s paper *Who trains the trainers?* (1979). In the 1980s **courses** to meet the specific needs of trainers were developed in the form of university advanced certificates, components of master’s courses, and in 1989 the first fully-fledged MA, validated by Exeter University.

Professional **journals** such as the English Language Teaching Journal have for a number of years carried articles of interest to those involved in language teacher education but, as McGrath notes, “it was not until 1987, with the arrival of *The Teacher Trainer*, a quarterly ‘practical journal’, that trainers had their own channel of communication” (McGrath 1997:vii). Two years later, in 1989, IATEFL (the International Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign language) set up a Special Interest Group for teacher training which organises events and conferences, and publishes periodic newsletters.

There are a growing number of conferences and workshops, such as those run by IATEFL, which include themes relevant to teacher training in ELT. In this way ideas and experiences are exchanged between fellow members of the profession.

Since the early 1990s institutions such as universities, the British Council and the Bell Educational Trust have been running **training courses and schemes**, in the UK and overseas, notably in India and Central and Eastern Europe. Kadepurkar describes a training scheme for 50,000 teachers in Maharashtra, India in 1994-5, which used a cascade model, as follows:

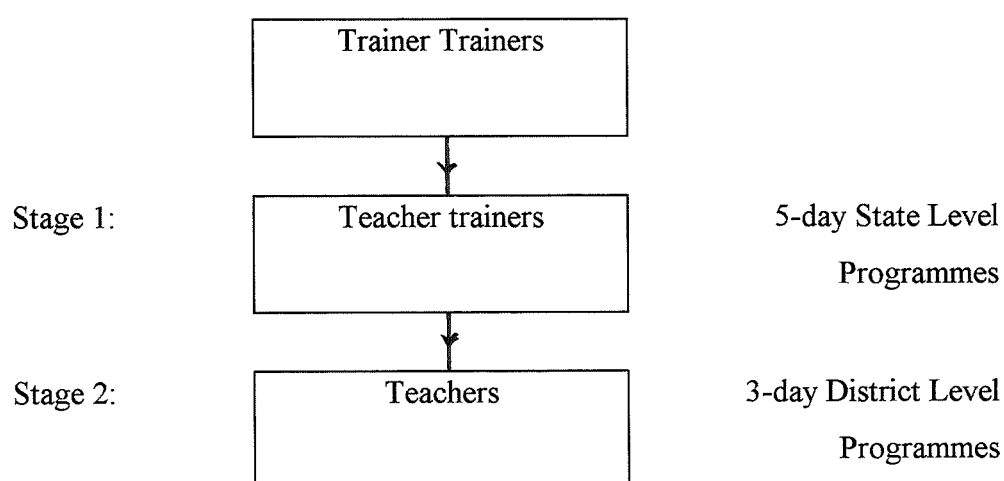


Figure 5. Cascade Model in two stages, each training the level below (from Figure 2 (Kadepurkar 1997:198)).

Manuals for the scheme which contained guidance for the facilitators in the teacher training programme and guidance materials for the teachers in schools were written by the British Council.

Gilpin (1997) describes how an earlier training programme in Tamil Nadu, India, was also directed and planned by the British Council together with the local education ministry. She describes the scheme as “a wholly top-down transmission model” planned and implemented by those “in authority” (Gilpin 1997:192). She goes on to say that in more recent schemes, for example in Thailand and that described above in Maharashtra, a more consultative approach was taken. However, an institutional and hierarchical structure is inherent in such schemes, and the direct link from person to person within the institutional setting is transparent: “in cascade training a trainer is someone who has only just been trained by someone else. The new trainer has to try to pass on, with as little dilution as possible what they themselves have only just learned” (Woodward 1997:4).

On a smaller scale, and based in the UK, are schemes run by awarding bodies such as UCLES, in conjunction with teacher training institutions. These are organised programmes for the preparation of ELT teacher trainers. From 1993 UCLES has specified training, induction and briefing procedures for those wishing to be a trainer on courses leading to the board’s teacher training qualifications. Marshall and Edwards (1997) describe how such a training programme was conducted using a mentoring approach. Nicki Marshall underwent an approved programme of in-service development activities supervised by an externally appointed CTEFLA trainer, Corony Edwards. The supervisor monitored the new trainer’s development and reported back to UCLES on her progress.

In an article describing the programme the new trainer includes a breakdown of her perception of how influential different people were on her training. The figure below shows that the influences of the mentor and the UCLES assessor (both of whom represent one of the institutions - UCLES) together make up an estimated 30%, training colleagues (who represent the training institution) make up a further 25%. She recognises the direct influence the two institutions have on the process of her training.

Corony, the mentor, also recognises the influence of the institution (UCLES) when she says: “There’s a potential conflict between being an assessor/quality controller for UCLES and a supporter and supervisor for someone” (Marshall and Edwards 1997:65).

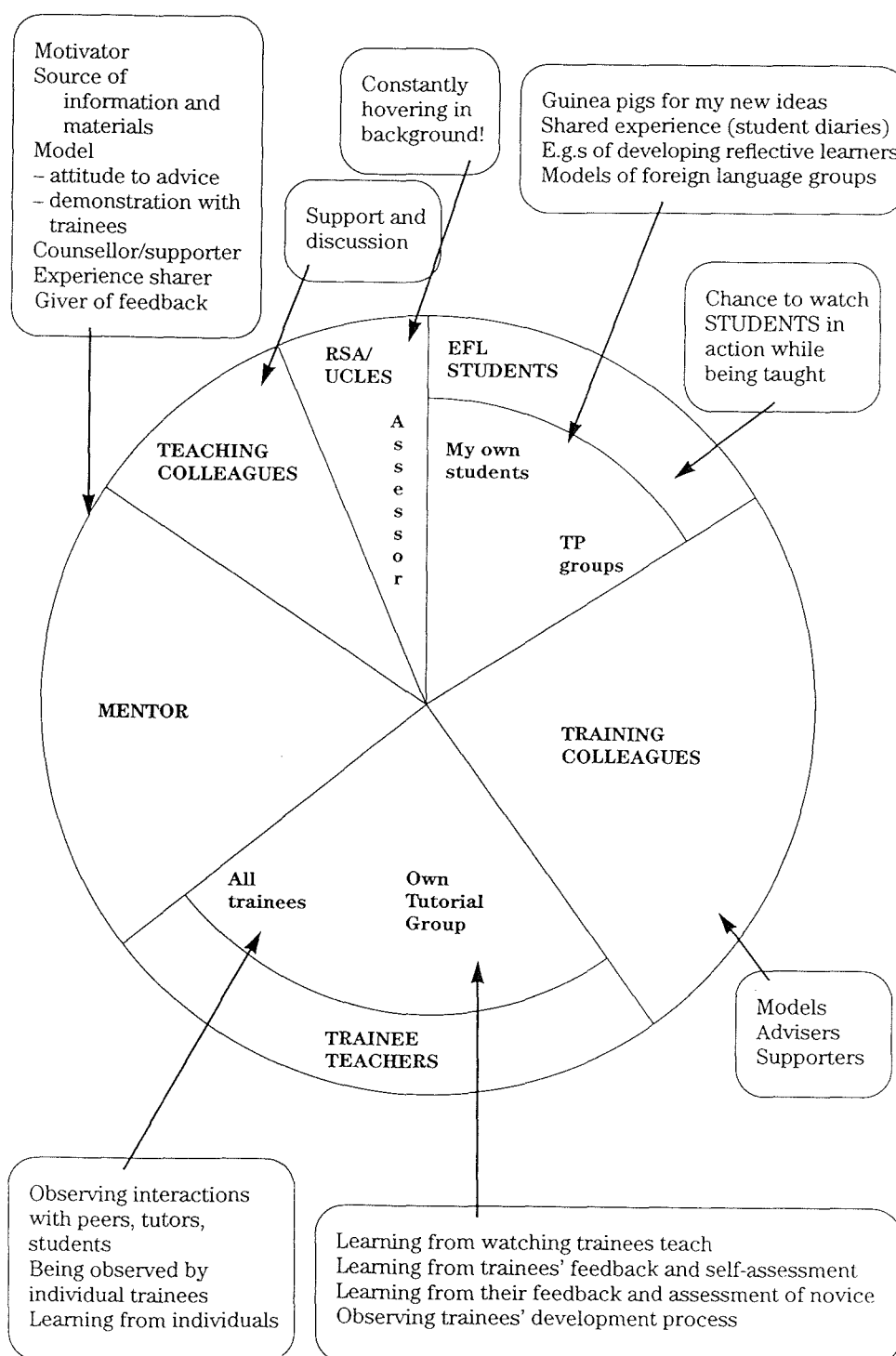


Figure 6. Becoming a teacher: influential people (impression of relative importance)  
(Figure 1 in Marshall and Edwards (1997:68))

The weightings (or percentages) given by the person in training to the various influences are, of course, not measurable, and are perforce subjective in nature. However, the article gives an interesting insight into one person's view of the process by which she became trained.

The mentoring approach, with its emphasis on good relations between the mentor and the person in training, often leads to a wish by the trainer in training to behave in as similar manner as possible to the mentor. Nicki voices this when she compares her performance with that of her mentor: "I was pleased and relieved that Corony's feedback session was conducted on very similar lines to mine and that her notes were almost identical to the ones I'd made" (Marshall and Edwards 1997:66). This a clear example of how knowledge and practice are passed on within the training programme.

Another way in which the institution can have an influence is by means of its **assessment schemes**. For example, experienced trainers within the UCLES schemes become the assessors of CELTA and DELTA courses/candidates of other training centres. In this way ideas on content and practice are passed on from more experienced to less experienced trainers.

In addition to such schemes there are **publications** designed to help the new trainer. For example, *Teaching Practice Handbook* (Gower, Phillips et al. 1995), while mainly aimed at the trainee, has a chapter entitled *For the New Trainer* in which guidelines are given on such issues as *The Role of the TP Supervisor* and *Giving Feedback on Lessons Observed*. The final words of this chapter are: "as a trainer you should expect to receive training, guidance and continuing support from the training centre where you work. You should also seek and receive feedback on your own performance" (Gower, Phillips et al. 1995:208).

In truth this is how the majority of current trainers learned their craft, through **in-service training and development**: by talking to others within the training institution in which they work, by learning from experienced trainers, by 'sitting with Nelly', by getting feedback from their line managers and from the trainees themselves. Most trainers, and

especially those who have been doing the job for a number of years have received no formal training of the types described above. As Woodward says: “quite a few trainers have fallen into the role in the same sort of way as actors do - by first understudying and then filling the role when someone falls ill or the company decides to tour abroad!” (Woodward 1997:6).

Training institutions (schools and examination boards), therefore, have a major role to play in passing on knowledge and practice to new trainers. This is done formally by means of briefing, induction and training sessions/days; by the monitoring of performance through observation and appraisal; by handbooks, manuals and guides; by documentation - feedback checklists and forms, reports, client satisfaction procedures etc.. There are a myriad of ways by which the institutions can make its expectations known and insist on certain types and standards of behaviour.

There are also more **informal ways** in which knowledge and practice is passed on within institutions: through customs and folk-lore, by talking to colleagues within the same institution (rated as quite a significant influence by Nicki Marshall - see Figure 6, above), by swapping experiences at workshops, and even via gossip picked up in the conference bar!

In sum: the institution, whether in the broad sense of the ELT profession, or in the narrower sense of the school or examination board, can influence in a variety of ways the ideas, the attitudes, the behaviour and the discourse of those engaged in training and teacher development.

#### ***12.1.4 Ways in which knowledge and practice is passed on to the trainers and***

##### ***Directors of Studies in the study***

As noted in *Section 12.1.3*, there is considerable evidence for the influence of the institution(s) on the way assessors in the study conduct the feedback sessions. As with many current trainers none of the trainers or DOSs have any formal, externally awarded qualifications in training teachers. However, they do have formal and informal training, provided by the institutions for which they work. From my knowledge of the trainers,



and after discussion with them in the interviews, I can say with some confidence that the main influences on their attitudes and performance are the examinations board (UCLES) and the training institute (The Bell School). In the case of the DOSs the main influence is the institution by which they are employed - The Bell Educational Trust.

Influence from the institutions is exerted by the following means.

#### **Briefing, induction and training sessions/days**

Both UCLES and the Bell Schools run obligatory briefing and training days for its trainers/DOSs. Normally DOSs attend an annual two day conference for all senior staff and a briefing day for all Directors of Studies. Training days are considered to be particularly important for new trainers/DOSs but are also viewed as a way in which experienced people can keep up to date with new procedures and developments.

During these days procedures are formally detailed by central Bell academic staff/UCLES staff. In addition, participants may explore an area of practice: for example they may view a video of a lesson and/or feedback session and discuss what they might do in a similar situation, or take part in a role play in which they have to play the part of a DOS with a 'problem' teacher.

#### **The monitoring of performance, including observation and appraisal**

Both UCLES and Bell monitor the performance of the trainers/DOSs. They are observed giving input on courses and giving feedback to trainees/teachers. Feedback is sought on their performance from the trainees and teachers. Their performance is discussed with the 'assessor/monitor' from the institution and in the case of the DOSs a more formal appraisal interview is conducted.

#### **Handbooks, manuals and guides; documentation - feedback checklists and forms, reports, client satisfaction procedures etc.**

Both institutions provide a great deal of documentation to guide the trainers and DOSs. UCLES has specified forms related to feedback sessions and the DOSs are provided with a comprehensive Handbook which includes documentation concerning the giving of

feedback to teachers. One of the new DOSs (Amy) sums up the assistance afforded by the Bell:

*I've been well-briefed with the briefing sessions and the Handbook etc. I feel I know what I'm doing.*

### **Opportunities for more informal exchange of ideas**

The trainers and DOSs often have opportunities to meet trainers within the UCLES scheme and colleagues from other Bell Schools at professional conference days and 'get-togethers'. There is a chance to exchange ideas and experiences within the wider professional institutional framework.

### **Books, professional journals, magazines**

Trainers and Directors of Studies are also influenced by the wider institute of the ELT profession through their reading. This reading can vary widely in type. It can be done within the context of the school as preparation for a staff development session, for example. On the other hand it might be a five minute scan of the EL Gazette (a fairly light-weight monthly news and views magazine) over coffee in the staff room.

### ***12.1.5 The influence of the institution: conclusions***

In *Section 12.1* I aimed to complete the second of the two main aims of the study:

- To examine to what extent the **discourse** of the feedback session is created as a result of :
  - i) the **roles** of the participants as perceived by others not participating in the conversation;
  - ii) the **function** of the session as created by the expectations of the institutions for which they work.

In conclusion: I believe there is a strong claim for believing that the institution, in both its wide and narrow definitions, has a strong influence, through the mechanisms described in *Section 12.1.4* above, on the degree of knowledge, the attitudes, and the behaviour of

the assessors, on their perception of role and function within the specific feedback session, and ultimately on the discourse that takes place within the encounter.

## **12. 2 The reciprocal nature of the relationship between institution and discourse**

In *Section 12.1* I described the influence exerted by the institutions within which the feedback sessions operate on the perceptions, behaviour and discourse of the assessors. In the second part of this chapter I turn to the reciprocal relationship and the final aim of the study:

- To evaluate whether the feedback session can be counted as an example of the way in which “discourse identities and institutional roles are ... instantiated through talk” (Boden 1994:77), and to what extent the relationship between the discourse and the institution can be described as reciprocal and self-perpetuating.

I intend to argue that the discourse shaped by the assessors in the context of teacher training and development serves to reinforce the perception and performance of the roles and functions so that they become further ‘institutionalised’.

### ***12.2.1 The reciprocal relationship between discourse and the institution: a review of the literature***

#### **Stability and routinisation**

As already noted in *Section 12.1*, a number of researchers studying institutional discourse have noticed that standard patterns of behaviour are a common feature, and that these patterns are shaped by the ‘professional’ or representative of the institution. For example, Drew and Heritage claim that: “standard patterns in institutional encounters are likely to owe much to the direction and initiative of the institutional professional” (Drew and Heritage 1992:44), and that the reason for such patterns is that “professionals tend to develop ...standard practices for managing the tasks of their routine encounters” (Drew and Heritage 1992:44).

Kress claims that specific generic types of encounters, which are produced by specific social institutions, “attain a certain degree of stability and persistence over time” (Kress 1990:4). This stability can be viewed as being positive or negative in nature. As described in *Section 12.1*, institutions often encourage stability; they strive to attain a certain uniformity of good practice by the induction, briefing and up-dating of its members. Also, as Prahbu notes about behaviour in the classroom: “like all recurrent social encounters, teaching requires a certain degree of routine to make it sustainable or even endurable” (1990:173). Maingay agrees in his discussion about teacher training: “Large parts of teacher training activities become fairly automatic .. a lot of repeated behaviour in the teacher training arena is positive” (Maingay 1997:119). It is very inefficient of time and energy to keep inventing the wheel.

On the other hand, lack of change may be the result of participants continuing with their routine practices because they no longer evaluate the effectiveness of what they are doing. Such behaviour can become routinised to the point of fossilisation. Maingay feels that “over-routinisation ... is not positive. Over-routinisation is when the formulaic pattern ... is used inappropriately” (Maingay 1997:119). A trainer’s behaviour can “become over-routinised to such an extent that s/he is no longer aware of what is really happening” (Maingay 1997:122), and that underlying assumptions are no longer questioned (Maingay 1997:120). He goes on to claim that this fossilisation is “by definition” invisible to the trainer, precisely because it has become automatic (Maingay 1997:120).

Menne gives another reason for lack of change in institutional encounters. He feels that once power relationships have been established stagnation results: “it is the nature of things that people who have reached a certain level in a hierarchy become attached to the hierarchy itself. Having succeeded in reaching that level, they stop querying the basis of their job” (Menne 1993:28).

### **Institutionalisation and reciprocity**

The view has also been put forward, by a number of researchers in the field, that the relationship between institution and talk is reciprocal in nature: that the talk itself is

instrumental in creating or reinforcing the institutional roles, and so makes the presence of similar language patterns more likely in future conversations within the same setting.

This is certainly one of Boden's central themes in her book *The Business of Talk* (1994): that the routinised nature of the encounter can lead to further institutionalisation. She claims that people through talk create and recreate the institution and the institution in turn shapes the attitude and talk of the people while they are 'at work'. It is as part of this reflexive process that "discourse identities and institutional roles are surely instantiated through talk" (Boden 1994:77).

Paul ten Have agrees when he claims that, instead of the doctor/patient interaction being a *product* of an institution, it can be the other way round (ten Have 1991). Bergmann gives evidence from the medical encounter to show how the talk which results from institutional practice makes it more likely that such discourse will be reproduced in future, similar conversations. He maintains that the special features of talk he identifies within the psychiatric interview are used repeatedly, and result in the creation of a particular meaning structure. He claims that "the pervasive element of discretion in psychiatric interviews must be viewed and analyzed as a phenomenon, in which the peculiar and paradoxical meaning structure of present-day psychiatry is reproduced" (Bergmann 1992:155).

As early as 1984, in a study of conversation within institutional settings, Heritage claimed that the participants can "talk an institution into being" (Heritage 1984:290). The same point is taken up by Boden (1994) ten years later and applied more generally: "When people talk they are simultaneously and reflexively talking their relationships, organizations and the whole institution into action or 'being'" (Boden 1994:14).

Clayman (1992) agrees when he states that "it is through the context-sensitive deployment of formal interactional practices that a sequence of talk betrays its "institutional" character. And it is precisely through such specialized sequences of talk that social institutions are incrementally constituted" (Clayman 1992:197).

### ***12.2.2 Reciprocity within the feedback session***

What evidence do we have for believing that, in the feedback session, the institution is ‘talked into being’, and that the continuing nature of the feedback session is largely effected through talk? I believe that much of the evidence to support such an argument has been presented in detail earlier in this study.

It has been established that the discourse of the sessions is largely shaped by the ‘professional’ - the assessor. In addition, the power attached to the roles played by the participants is clearly a determining factor in terms of whose version of events becomes the ‘official’ one. It would seem that certain people - those who represent the institution - have more influence in deciding whose account (oral and/or written) is passed on to the future. In the feedback session two or more people are comparing accounts of the same event (the lesson) and deciding whose account is the ‘true’ one. The participants are negotiating an agreement about what happened and then ‘institutionalising’ that decision by making a record that will go on the file of the person receiving feedback. The assessor’s accounts of all or part of the events (the lessons and the feedback sessions) can also inform review meetings, reports, and planning documents drawn up by the institution. The interpretation can also influence the more formal briefing documents and training sessions designed for people being initiated as assessors in the institution, or be passed down in the form of advice, suggestions, cautionary tales, or even as gossip. In these ways - both planned and haphazard, formal and informal - the ‘institutional’ interpretation is perpetuated and forms the precedent for future such interpretations.

Information has also been presented (in *Section 12.1*) about the way knowledge and practice is passed on within institutions to new trainers. The training of new trainers and Directors of Studies takes place, for the most part, through the observation and the copying of the behaviour of experienced people within the institution (school, training centre and examination scheme). This often results in the reproduction by new recruits of the way in which the sessions are conducted, and even in the detail of the talk. In addition, appropriate procedures and behaviour are explained in guides and handbooks.

These documents are written by those who already have experience in conducting such sessions, and so are written in their 'language'.

The hope of those within the school or training centre is that in this way the transmission of expertise and experience ensures stability and the maintenance of standards within the institution. What also results is a type of self-perpetuating discourse, or way of talking, which all those within the institution learn and come to have in common. The discourse, in turn, transmits and reinforces the institutional values.

This is especially so if the initial training is followed up by a scheme of monitoring and evaluation set up and administered by people within the institution. Evaluation and appraisal of the way the less experienced trainers give feedback offers further opportunity for the discourse and values of those most entrenched within the institution to be expressed, internalised and reproduced. As they rise within the hierarchy these less experienced people become those with the most experience who, in their turn, influence the behaviour of the newer trainers. In this manner knowledge and practice is passed on through the talk, from one generation of trainers to another.

I have reason to think, from discussions I have had with trainers (for example, with Sonya below), that new trainers also rely on their memories of feedback sessions in which they themselves were trainees or teachers. They model their behaviour on the assessors who gave them feedback - especially if, as is likely, the experience was a positive one and they liked and admired their trainer or Director of Studies. Limited experience can result in inappropriate modelling. For example, DOS4 (Sonya) was a new Director of Studies at the time of the study. The way she conducted feedback is more typical, in some ways, of the pre-service than of the in-service session: for example in the balance of negative and positive evaluation. I believe this is because, at the time, her experience of in-service training and development was limited and she had recently completed a course (a Diploma in ELT) in which she was a trainee. When I spoke to her recently (in June 1998) she remarked that now that she has more experience she conducts in-service sessions very differently from the way she did in the ones recorded for the study.

### ***12.2.3 The reciprocal relationship between discourse and the institution within the feedback session: conclusions***

Throughout the literature on institutional talk there is a recurring theme: the two-way relationship between the talk and the institutional roles played by the participants; the view that “the recursive features of both talk, and its organizational context, matter - to the talk, as well as to how the organization is created and sustained through talk” (Boden 1994:75).

In *Section 12.1* I gave examples of recurring routinised sequences and language within the feedback sessions. *Section 12.2* has provided additional compelling evidence for the view that certain ways of behaving and talking have become so common within the context of ELT training and development that they can be described as institutionalised. Also, in *Section 12.2*, I have argued that, through the language used in the training and development of its trainers, and the talk employed to carry out its everyday procedures and practices as manifest in the feedback session, the institutions are created and re-created.

In sum, in addressing my third and final aim, I believe that I have provided evidence to support the claim that:

- the feedback session can be counted as an example of the way in which “discourse identities and institutional roles are ... instantiated through talk” (Boden 1994:77), and that the relationship between the discourse and the institution can be described as reciprocal and self-perpetuating.

To what extent this reciprocal relationship, and the resulting routinisation and institutionalisation, is generally positive or negative in nature is one of the subjects for discussion in the final chapter, *Chapter 13*.



## **CHAPTER 13: OVERALL CONCLUSIONS**

### **13.1 Summary of Research Findings**

In this study I have described and compared the behaviour, as exhibited in the talk, of participants within two sets of feedback sessions, and offered explanations for this behaviour. The findings can be summarised as follows:

- Both sets of feedback session can be said to belong to the type of discourse described as ‘talk at work’. They contain features typical of other conversations identified in the literature as institutional talk, and they differ significantly from informal or non-institutional conversations.
- The details of the discourse and the differences between the two types of feedback session are created largely as a result of the way the participants perceive their roles and the function of the sessions. In turn, these perceptions and the resulting discourse are, to a significant extent, shaped by the institutions within which they operate.
- In recursive fashion, the discourse serves to reinforce the perception of the roles and functions so that they become further institutionalised.

### **13.2 Evaluation of the methodology**

The research perspectives explored in the study were both etic and emic in type. The etic perspective depended on observation and analysis of the conversations, while the interpretation of events as perceived by the participants provided the emic perspective. My role as a researcher also changed, depending on the perspective. The Conversation Analysis was undertaken from the standpoint of an outside observer. Patterns and regularities were identified, and comparisons made with conversations described by other researchers in the field. The findings, as a consequence, are largely descriptive and comparative in nature. Any interpretation put on the findings relies on a body of knowledge and set of interpretations already established by others in the field. By contrast, the conclusions I drew from the data provided by the participants depended much more on my own understanding and interpretation. In respect to this data, not only is the inside view of the participants elicited but, in addition, my perspective can be

described as that of an 'insider', someone who has experience and knowledge of the situations, the institutions, and in some cases the people, under scrutiny.

I believe this two-pronged approach has considerable advantages. For the most part the description afforded by the Conversation Analysis was confirmed by the data obtained by questioning the participants. This was especially true in respect to the understanding and acceptance of the roles and power relationships of the participants, and of their relationship with the institutions. This enabled me to draw on more than one type of evidence in order to formulate explanations and conclusions. I also felt able to put forward arguments with more confidence than if I had relied on only one set of data.

On the other hand, where the descriptive analysis resulted in findings not expected and/or not explained by previous research, the data obtained from the participants pointed to an explanation not evident from observation and a study of the transcripts alone. For example, the *description* of how the two sets of sessions were different, in terms of the degree of positive as opposed to negative evaluation present, was provided by the Conversation Analysis. The *explanation* for the difference, however, depended on data obtained from the participants, and on my knowledge of the context within which the conversations took place.

### **13.3 Limitations of the study**

I am aware of a number of limitations of this study which result from the methodology and the restricted scope of the research. The study was undertaken at a particular point in time: data for the pre-service sessions was collected over an eight-month period in 1992-3, and that for the in-service sessions collected over a six-month period in 1995. The sessions took place within only one organisation - that of the Bell Educational Trust, although the pre-service and in-service sessions took place in different schools or departments.

Because of the limited provenance of the data the question must be asked: can the findings be taken as typical of training and development within ELT? It may be that the

phenomena observed are peculiar to either that place and/or time, and that if the study had been conducted within a different organisation, or at a different time, then the findings themselves would have been significantly different.

Although the scope of the study did not permit detailed research within a range of institutions and over a longer period of time, I am confident that the findings can, for the most part, be accepted as typical of feedback sessions still taking place both in the Bell and in similar ELT organisations. The following personal experiences are given to support this claim.

As an assessor for the RSA/Cambridge CTEFLA scheme I had occasion to be present in a large number of feedback sessions, in a range of different schools, from 1985 until 1995. Although I did not undertake the type of detailed research described in this study, I observed the feedback sessions and, through discussion with the participants, learned a great deal about their perceptions of the process. The feedback sessions themselves and the views of the participants were remarkably similar, and my observations lead me to believe that the feedback sessions taking place at the Bell School, Cambridge, on which this study is based, were typical of those taking place at the time in many institutions throughout the UK. The institutional influence exerted by the examination board (of which, as an assessor, I was part) seemed to be of great importance in determining the general shape of the conversation and even, to some extent, the detail of the discourse.

I also have reason to believe, from a (very) personal communication, that the feedback sessions that currently take place within the new RSA/Cambridge CELTA pre-service course (which replaced the CTEFLA course) are very similar to those described in the study. My daughter took a CELTA course in May 1998 at Newnham Language Centre, Cambridge (i.e. not a Bell School, though located in the same city). When I asked her to describe a typical feedback session - who spoke, how the session started, what questions were asked etc. - the similarity was striking between her description of her feedback sessions and my description of the pre-service sessions in the study. Although such anecdotal evidence cannot have the same status as that obtained from a rigorously

researched study it serves to indicate that the findings in respect to the *pre-service* sessions are generalisable.

I also feel that the *in-service* sessions described in the study are not untypical of many held as part of in-service training and development, in ELT schools and colleges throughout the world. In October 1997 I held a workshop on the topic of lesson observation and feedback, with academic managers (Directors of Studies) from schools and institutions based in a number of countries. When they were asked to list what, for them, was the main purpose of the practice they mentioned a number of functions, noting that it depended on the circumstances and the people being observed: to support and boost the confidence of the teacher; to identify skills that the teacher is performing well; to assure the teacher that the organisation for which s/he works cares about standards; to maintain and improve the standard of teaching in the classroom. These functions are very similar to those voiced by the Directors of Studies in the study. The ensuing discussion also provided evidence that the Directors of Studies were very aware of their responsibility to, and the influence from, the clients, the institutions for which they worked, and the wider institution of the profession.

#### **13.4 Implications for further research and action**

I hope that the findings of this research will be of interest to teacher trainers and to those concerned with in-service training and development within the ELT profession - both in the UK and overseas. The study may even contain some points which are relevant to those interested in the training and development of teachers of other subjects.

My findings might encourage trainers in different institutions to conduct similar research into their own practice and procedures. I feel that it is important to have insight into the practice of lesson observation and feedback - if possible from the point of view of the outsider/analyst, and from that of the participants (especially those receiving feedback). This insight can be used to question present practice and help those who give feedback, and the institutions that authorise the practice, to decide whether they are employing the

most efficient, effective, and humane methods in order to achieve their objectives. It may be that other methods could be used instead, or in addition.

There are particular areas of interest to me, that arise from the present study, and that justify further research. The following questions suggest themselves:

- Can trainers/Directors of Studies improve their practice by analysing their own behaviour and that of their trainees/teachers, and by eliciting the perceptions of those who receive feedback?
- What are the similarities and differences to be found in feedback sessions held between different combinations of native-speaker and non-native speaker trainers/trainees and Directors of Studies/teachers, particularly in countries where English is not the first language? How do institutional pressures and prejudices operate in these situations?
- How can change be managed within institutional settings?

The first two questions are concerned with more practical, pragmatic issues. The third is more wide-reaching in scope and has more general implications for a range of social contexts. One of the most important findings of this study has been that there is a remarkable degree of stability and consistency exhibited in feedback sessions conducted between different people within the same institutional context. Roles, procedures, even language patterns, are repeated and perpetuated. This stability can be viewed as being positive or negative in nature. As noted in *Section 12.1*, institutions plan the induction, briefing and up-dating of its members with the express purpose of bringing about standardisation of good-practice. The danger lies when practices are passed on and adopted in an unthinking manner; when there is no evaluation of the function or effectiveness of routinised behaviour. The challenge for those involved in training and development is to keep the benefits that agreed practices and routines can bring in terms of efficiency, consistency of standards, and feelings of security and, at the same time, to prevent unthinking routinisation or ‘fossilisation’.

Undoubtedly change does take place, even within genres viewed as inherently stable (Kress 1990:5), and change management is a topic of current interest in the ELT profession as in many others. As recently as November 1998 a conference organised by the IATEFL Teacher Training Special Interest Group was held with the theme of 'Changing Teacher Behaviour'. It is interesting that the conference focused on changing the behaviour of the teacher, not that of the trainer!

Through this study I feel have gained a better understanding of the relationships between role, function, discourse and institutions within the context of ELT training and development, and in particular an appreciation of the stable nature of such relationships. The next step is to take this investigation further, into an examination of how change can take place within a stable institutional framework. This, of course, assumes that further investigation of the reciprocal relationship between behaviour and the institution does not confirm Karr's (1849) claim: *Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose*.

## Bibliography

- Atkinson, J. M. (1982). "Understanding formality." British Journal of Sociology **33**.
- Atkinson, J. M. (1992). Displaying neutrality: formal aspects of informal court proceedings. Talk at Work. P. Drew and J. Heritage. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press: 199-211.
- Austin, J. L. (1962). How to Do Things with Words. Oxford, Clarendon Press.
- Barnlund, D. and S. Araki (1985). "Intercultural encounters: the management of compliments by Japanese and American." Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology **16**: (9-26).
- Bashiruddin, A., J. Edge, and E. Hughes-Pelegrin. (1990). Who speaks in seminars? Status, culture and gender at Durham University. Language and Power: British Studies in Applied Linguistics, BAAL/CILT. **5**: 74-84.
- Bergmann, J. R. (1992). Veiled morality: notes on discretion in psychiatry. Talk at Work. P. Drew and J. Heritage. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Bhatia (1993). Analysing Genre: language use in professional settings. London, Longman.
- Birdwhistell, R. (1973). Kinesics and Context. Harmondsworth, Penguin.
- Boden, D. (1994). The Business of Talk. Cambridge, Polity Press.
- Boden, D. and D. H. Zimmerman, Eds. (1991). Talk and Social Structure. Cambridge, Polity Press.
- Brown, G. and G. Yule (1983). Discourse Analysis. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Brown, P. and S. C. Levinson (1978). Universals in language usage: politeness phenomenon. Questions and Politeness. E. Goody. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press: 56-310.
- Brown, P. and S. C. Levinson (1987). Politeness. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Button, G. (1992). Answers as interactional products. Talk at Work. P. Drew and J. Heritage. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Button, G. and J. R. E. Lee, Eds. (1987). Talk and Social Organisation. Clevedon, Multilingual Matters.

- Clayman, S. E. (1992). Footing in the achievement of neutrality. Talk at Work. P. Drew and J. Heritage. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Cohen, L. and L. Manion (1994). Research Methods in Education. London, Routledge.
- Coleman, H., Ed. (1989). Working with Language: a multidisciplinary consideration of language use in work contexts, Mouton de gruyter.
- Cook, G. (1989). Discourse. Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- Cook, G. (1990). "Transcribing Infinity: Problems of Context Presentation." Journal of Pragmatics 14(1): 1-24.
- Coulthard, M (1985). An Introduction to Discourse Analysis. London, Longman.
- Coulthard, M. and M. Ashby (1976). A linguistic description of doctor-patient interviews. Studies in Everyday Medical Life. M. Wadsworth and D. Robinson. London, Robertson.
- Coulthard, M. and M. Montgomery, Eds. (1981). Studies in Discourse Analysis. London, Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Davis, R. and P. Worley (1979). Who trains the trainers? Teacher Training. S. Holden. Oxford, Modern English Publications.
- Drew, P. (1984). Speakers' reporting in conversation sequences. Structures of Social Action: Studies in Conversation Analysis. J. M. Atkinson and J. Heritage. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press: (129-51).
- Drew, P. (1992). Contested evidence in courtroom cross-examination: the case of trial for rape. Talk at Work. P. Drew and J. Heritage. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press: (470-520).
- Drew, P. and J. Heritage (1992). Analyzing talk at work: an introduction. Talk at Work. P. Drew and J. Heritage. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press: 3-65.
- Drew, P. and J. Heritage (1992). Talk at Work. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Duranti, A. and C. Goodwin, Eds. (1992). Rethinking Context: Language as an Interactive Phenomenon. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Ericson, F. (1981). Some approaches to inquiry in school-community ethnography. Culture and the Bilingual Classroom: studies in classroom ethnology. H. Trueba, G. Guthrie and H. Au. Rowley, MA, Newbury House: 17-35.
- Erikson, F. and J. Schultz (1981). The Counselor as Gatekeeper: Social Interaction in Interviews. New York, Academic Press.



- Fairclough, N. (1989). Language and Power. Harlow, Longman.
- Fairclough, N. (1995). Critical Discourse Analysis. London, Longman.
- Fairclough, N. (1996). "A reply to Henry Widdowson's 'Discourse analysis: a critical view'." Language and Literature 5(1): (49-56).
- Frankel, R. M. (1984). "From sentence to sequence: understanding the medical encounter through micro-interactional analysis." Discourse Processes 7: 135-70.
- Frankel, R. M. (1990). Talking in Interviews: a dispreference for patient-initiated questions in physician-patient encounters. Interaction Competence. G. Psathas. Washington, DC, University Press of America: (231-62).
- Gall, M. D., W. R. Borg, and J. P. Gall, Eds. (1996). Educational Research: an Introduction. White Plains, NY, Longman.
- Garfinkel, H. (1971). Studies in Ethnomethodology. Englewood Cliffs, NJ, Prentice Hall.
- Gilpin, A. (1997). Cascade Training: Sustainability or Dilution. Learning to Train: Perspectives on the Development of Language Teacher Trainers. I. McGrath. Hemel Hempstead, Prentice Hall.
- Goffman, E. (1971). Relations in Public. New York, Basic Books.
- Goodwin, C. and A. Duranti (1992). Rethinking Context: an introduction. Rethinking Context: Language as an Interactive Phenomenon. A. Duranti and C. Goodwin. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press: (1-42).
- Goodwin, C. and M. H. Goodwin (1992). Assessments and the construction of context. Rethinking Context: Language as an Interactive Phenomenon. C. Goodwin and A. Duranti. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Gower, R., D. Phillips, and S. Walters. (1995). Teaching Practice Handbook. Oxford, Heinemann.
- Grainger, K. (1990). Care and control: Interactional management in nursing the elderly. Language and Power. British Studies in Applied Linguistics, BAAL CILT. 5.
- Greatbach, D. (1992). Disagreement between news interviewees. Talk at Work. P. Drew and J. Heritage. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Green, J., M. Franquiz, and C. Dixon. (1997). "The Myth of the Objective Transcript: Transcribing as a Situated Act." TESOL Quarterly 31(1): 172-176.

- Grice, H. P. (1975). Logic and Conversation. Syntax and semantics. P. Cole and J. L. Morgan. New York, Academic Press. **III: Speech Acts**: 41-58.
- Gumperz, J. (1992). Interviewing in intercultural situations. Talk at Work. P. Drew and J. Heritage. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Harris, S. (1989). Defendant Resistance to power and control in court. Working with Language: a multidisciplinary consideration of language use in work contexts. H. Coleman, Mouton de gruyter: 131-164.
- Heath, C. (1981). The opening sequence in doctor-patient interaction. Medical Work: Realities and Routines. P. Atkinson and C. Heath. Aldershot, Gower: 71-90.
- Heath, C. (1992). The delivery and reception of diagnoses in the general practice consultation. Talk at Work. P. Drew and J. Heritage. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press: 235-267.
- Heritage, J. (1984). A change of state token and aspects of its sequential placement. Structures of Social Action: Studies in Conversation Analysis. J. M. Atkinson and J. Heritage. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Heritage, J. (1984). Garfinkel and Ethnomethodology. Cambridge, Polity Press.
- Heritage, J. and D. Greatbach (1991). On the institutional character of institutional talk: the case of news interviews. Talk and Social Structure. D. Boden and D. Zimmerman. Cambridge, Polity Press: 93-137.
- Heritage, J. and S. Sefi (1992). Dilemmas of advice: aspects of the delivery and reception of advice in interactions between Health Visitors and first-time mothers. Talk at Work. P. Drew and J. Heritage. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Heritage, J. and D. R. Watson (1979). Formulations as conversational objects. Everyday Language: Studies in Ethnomethodology. G. Psathas. New York, Erlbaum.
- Holmes, J. (1988). "Compliments and compliment responses in New Zealand English." Anthropological Linguistics **28**: 485-508.
- Holmes, J. (1988). "Paying compliments." Journal of Pragmatics **12**: 445-65.
- Holmes, J. and D. Brown (1987). "Teachers and Students learning about compliments." TESOL Quarterly **21**: 523-46.
- Hopkins, D. (1993). A Teacher's Guide to Classroom Research. Buckingham, Open University Press.

- Hughes, D. (1982). "Control in the medical consultation." Sociology 16: 359-76.
- Jackson, R. M. and J. M. W. Rothney (1961). "A comparative study of the mailed questionnaire and the interview in follow-up studies." Personnel and Guidance Journal 39: 569-571.
- Jensen, V. (1973). "Communicative functions of silence." ETC 30: 249-57.
- Kadepurkar, H. (1997). Towards Evaluation of Teacher Training: A Case Study of the English Language Development Project in Maharashtra, India. Learning to Train: Perspectives on the Development of Language Teacher Trainers. I. McGrath. Hemel Hempstead, Prentice Hall.
- Karr, A. (1849). Les Guêpes. The Modern Dictionary of Quotations. (1963). R. Hyman. London, Evans.
- Katz, J. (1977). Propositional Structure and Illocutionary Force. New York, Crowell.
- Knapp, M., R. Hopper, and R. Bell. (1984). "Compliments: a descriptive taxonomy." Journal of Communications 34: 19-31.
- Kress, G. (1989). Linguistic Process in Sociocultural Practice. Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- Kress, G. (1990). "Two kinds of power: Gunther Kress on genre." The English Magazine 24: 4-7.
- Labov, W. (1972). "Some principles of linguistic methodology." Language in Society, 1(1): 97-120.
- Labov, W. and D. Fanshel (1977). Therapeutic Discourse. New York: Academic Press.
- Lakoff, R. (1973). The logic of politeness; or minding your p's and q's. Ninth regional meeting of the Chicago Linguistics Society, Chicago, Chicago Linguistics Society.
- Lebra, T. (1987). "The cultural significance of silence in Japanese communication." Multilingua 6(4): 343-57.
- Levinson, S. (1992). Activity types and language. Talk at Work. P. Drew and J. Heritage. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Levinson, S. C. (1983). Pragmatics. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Maingay, P. (1997). Raising Awareness of Awareness. Learning to Train: Perspectives on the Development of Language Teacher Trainers. I. McGrath. Hemel Hempstead, Prentice Hall.

- Manes, J. (1983). Compliments: A mirror of cultural values. Sociolinguistics and Language Acquisition. N. Wolfson and E. Judd. Rowley, MA, Newbury House.
- Marshall, N. and C. Edwards (1997). A Mentor Approach to Teacher Training Development. Learning to train: Perspectives on the Development of Language Teacher Trainers. I. McGrath. Hemel Hempstead, Prentice Hall.
- Maynard, D. (1989a). Notes on the delivery and reception of diagnostic news regarding mental disabilities. The interactional Order: new Directions in the Study of Social Order. D T Helm, W T Anderson, A. J. Meehanand and A. W. Rawls. New York, Irvington: 54-67.
- Maynard, D. (1989b). "Perspective-display sequences in conversation." Western Journal of Speech Communication **53**: 91-113.
- Maynard, D. (1991). Perspective-display sequences and the delivery and receipt of diagnostic news. Talk and Social Structure. D. Boden and D. H. Zimmerman. Cambridge, Polity press: 164-92.
- Maynard, D. (1992). On clinicians co-implicating recipients' perspective in the delivery of diagnostic news. Talk at Work. P. Drew and J. Heritage. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Maynard, D. W. and T. P. Wilson (1980). On the reification of social structure. Current Perspectives in Social Theory. S. G. McNall and G. N. Howes. Greenwich, CT, JAI Press. **1**: 287-322.
- McCarthy, M. (1991). Discourse Analysis for Language Teachers. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- McCarthy, M. and R. Carter (1994). Language as Discourse: Perspectives for Language Teaching. Harlow, London.
- McGrath, I., Ed. (1997). Learning to Train: Perspectives on the Development of Language Teacher Trainers. ELT Review. Hemel Hempstead, Prentice Hall.
- Mehan, H. (1985). The structure of classroom discourse. Handbook of Discourse Analysis. T. van Dijk. London, Academic Press. **III: Discourse and Dialogue**: 120-32.
- Menne, S. (1993). "Why train?" The Teacher Trainer 7(2): 28-30.

- Mishler, E. (1975). "Studies in dialogue and discourse: an exponential law of successive questioning." Language in Society 4: 31-51.
- Nelson, G., M. Al-Batal, and E. Echols. (1996). "Arabic and English Compliment Responses: Potential for Pragmatic Failure." Applied Linguistics 17(4): 411-432.
- Nelson, G., W. El-Bakary, and M. Al.Batal. (1993). "Egyptian and American compliments: a cross- cultural study." International Journal of Intercultural Relations 17: 293-313.
- Philips, S. (1992). The routinization of repair in courtroom discourse. Rethinking Context: Language as an interactive phenomenon. C. Goodwin and A. Durant. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press: 311-323.
- Phillips, D. (1993). The Language of Criticism. Birkbeck College, London.
- Phillips, D. (1994). "The Functions of Silence within the Context of Teacher Training." English Language Teaching Journal 48(3): 266-71.
- Phillips, D. (1997). Teacher Training: Observation and Feedback. Learning to Train: Perspectives on the Development of Language Teacher Trainers. I. McGrath. Hemel Hempstead, Prentice Hall: 82-8.
- Pike, K. L. (1964). Language in relation to a unified theory of structures of human behaviour. The Hague, Mouton.
- Pomerantz, A. (1987). Descriptions in Legal Settings. Talk and Social Organisation. G. Button and J. Lee. Clevedon, Multilingual Matters.
- Pomerantz, A. M. (1978). Compliment responses: notes on the co-operation of multiple constraints. Studies in the Organization of Conversational Interaction. J. N. Schenkein. New York, Academic Press: 79-112.
- Pomerantz, A. M. (1984a). Agreeing and disagreeing in assessments: some features of preferred/dispreferred turn shapes. Structures of Social Action: Studies in Conversation Analysis. J. M. Atkinson and J. Heritage. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Pomerantz, A. M. (1984b). "Giving a source or basis: the practice in conversation of telling "how I know"." Journal of Pragmatics 8: 607-625.
- Prabhu, N. (1990). "There is no best method. Why?" TESOL Quarterly 24(2): 161-76.
- Reynolds, M. (1990). Classroom power - some dynamics of classroom talk. Language and Power: British Studies in Applied Linguistics, BAAL/CILT. 5.

- Richards, J., J. Platt, and H. Weber. (1985). Longman Dictionary of Applied Linguistics. Harlow, Longman.
- Roberts, C. (1997). "Transcribing Talk: Issues of Representation." TESOL Quarterly **31**(1): 167-172.
- Sacks, H. (1972). On the analyzability of stories by children. Directions in Sociolinguistics. J. Gumperz and D. Hymes. New York, Holt, Rinehart, and Winston.
- Sacks, H. (1984). Notes on methodology. Structures of Social Action: Studies in Conversation Analysis. J. M. Atkinson and J. Heritage. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press: 21-7.
- Sacks, H. (1987). On the preference for agreement and contiguity in sequences and conversation. Talk and Social Organisation. G. Button and J. R. E. Lee. Clevedon, Multilingual Matters.
- Sacks, H., E. A. Schegloff, and G. Jefferson. (1974). "A simplest systematics for the organization and turntaking for conversation." Language **50**: 696-735.
- Schegloff, A. E. and H. Sacks (1973). "Opening up closings." Semiotica **8**(4): 289-327.
- Schegloff, E. A. (1982). Discourse as an interactional achievement: some uses of "uh huh" and other things that come between sentences. Analysing Discourse: text and talk. D. Tannen.
- Schegloff, E. A. (1992). On Talk and its Institutional Occasions. Talk at Work. P. Drew and J. Heritage. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press: 110-34.
- Searle, J. (1969). Speech Acts. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Searle, J. and D. Vanderveken (1985). Foundations of Illocutionary Logic. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Searle, J. R. (1965). What is a speech act? Philosophy in America. M. Black. London, Allen and Unwin.
- Sharrock, W. and B. Anderson (1987). Epilogue: The definition of alternatives: Some sources of confusion in interdisciplinary discussion. Talk and Social Organisation. G. Button and J. Lee. Clevedon, Multilingual Matters.
- Sharrock, W. and B. Anderson (1987). Work Flow in a Paediatric Clinic. Talk and Social Organisation. G. Button and J. Lee. Clevedon, Multilingual Matters.

- Sinclair, J. M. and M. Coulthard (1964). Beginning the Analysis of Discourse: The Language used by Teachers and Pupils. London, Oxford University Press.
- Sinclair, J. M. and M. Coulthard (1975). Towards an Analysis of Discourse. London, Oxford University Press.
- Stubbs, M. (1983). Discourse Analysis. Oxford, Blackwell.
- ten Have, P. (1991). Talk and Institution: a reconsideration of the “asymmetry” of doctor-patient interaction. Talk and Social Structure. D. Boden and D. H. Zimmerman. Cambridge, Polity Press: 138-63.
- Tsui, A. (1994). English Conversation. Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- van Dijk, T. A., Ed. (1985). Handbook of Discourse Analysis. London, Academic Press.
- van Lier, L. (1988). The Classroom and the Language Learner. Harlow, Longman.
- Wallman, S. (1979). “Social Anthropology of Work.” Association of Social Anthropologists: Monograph 19.
- Watson-Gegeo, K. A. (1988). “Ethnography in ESL: Defining the Essentials.” TESOL Quarterly 22(4): 575-592.
- West, C. (1984). Routine Complications: Troubles in Talk between Doctors and Patients. Bloomington, IN, Indiana University Press.
- Widdowson, H. (1995). “Discourse Analysis: a critical view.” Language and Literature 4(3): 157-172.
- Widdowson, H. (1995). “Review of N. Fairclough ‘Discourse and Social Change’ (1992).” Applied Linguistics 16(4).
- Wolfson, N. (1981). “Compliments in cross-cultural perspective.” TESOL Quarterly 15: 117-24.
- Wolfson, N. (1983). An empirically based analysis of compliments in American English. Sociolinguistics and Language Acquisition. N. Wolfson and E. Judd. Rowley, MA, Newbury House.
- Woodward, T. (1997). Trainer Training: A Question Matrix. Learning to Train: Perspectives on the Development of Language Teacher Trainers. I. McGrath. Hemel Hempstead, Prentice Hall.
- Yin, R. (1994). Case Study Research. Design and Methods. Newbury Park, CA, Sage.

- Yule, G. (1995). The paralinguistics of reference: representation in reported discourse.  
Principle and Practice in Applied Linguistics. G. Cook and B. Seidlhofer.  
Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- Zimmerman, D. (1992). The interactional organization of calls for emergency assistance.  
Talk at Work. P. Drew and J. Heritage. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.



## APPENDIX 1: Transcript of Pre-Service Feedback Session

### Session 1:

**Participants: TR1 - male teacher trainer. Trainees: Cath (female), Andrea (female), Polly (female), Lara (female).**

- 1 TR1 Cath, having talked to Andrea. You were on first - how do you =  
2 [
- 3 Cath Umm
- 4 TR1 = feel about your lesson?
- 5 Cath There were lots of bits and pieces which weren't quite right - er, you know, like  
6 the recording at the beginning wasn't clear enough er  
7 [
- 8 TR1 Oh I rather liked it.
- 9 Cath Did you like it? I wasn't sure whether they could really hear it. This is F's =
- 10 TR1 It was excellent.  
11 [
- 12 Cath = acting skills
- 13 TR1 It was excellent
- 14 Cath So it livened them up. It got them interested.
- 15 TR1 It was a lovely introduction to the reading actually, a nice idea, but what's the  
16 most important thing you've got to think about in terms of deciding whether we  
17 are happy with the lesson?
- 18 Cath Erm the achievement of aims.
- 19 TR1 OK
- 20 Cath I was reasonably happy that they were looking into the text deeper and deeper  
21 and using, like in the talk at the end, and I felt it was perhaps a bit rushed cos I  
22 would have liked to have some more time to discuss more.
- 23 TR1 What were you prompting Andrea? What were your questions? Were they  
24 relevant ones?
- 25 Andrea Erm I was saying about the role-play at the end. Erm what was the purpose of it?  
26 What what in their minds, was the purpose of them actually doing the role play?

27 I felt somehow it was a bit up in the air and they needed somehow more  
 28 characterisation or a bit more structure or a reason for doing it? It was  
 29 interesting because they must have thought, “Why on earth did he spend 56 years  
 30 in bed”, so they immediately started asking the right questions, but I just felt they  
 31 wanted to sort of, yes it was nice, having a chat about it, but what’d they actually  
 32 achieved in the lesson doing that?  
 33 (2 secs)

34 TR1 Polly? Lara? Polly, what did you think about it?

35 Polly Maybe they could have had some more prompts, just to give them some idea of  
 36 what to say.

37 Cath Perhaps write something down (nods)

38 Polly Erm, yes.

39 TR1 I think what we’ve got to think about today is your change from a high level to a  
 40 low level =  
 41 [

42 Cath Yeah (nods).

43 TR1 = and what you can get away with at a higher level =  
 44 [

45 Cath Yeah (nods)

46 TR1 = you can’t necessarily =  
 47 [

48 Cath Right

49 TR1 = get away with at this level. Yeah?

50 Cath Yeah (nods)

51 TR1 I thought the role-play as a response to the text was a lovely one.

52 Cath (nods)

53 TR1 Yeah? The idea of it was wonderful because it is something you’ve got to have a  
 54 personal reaction to.

55 Cath Yeah (nods)

56 TR1 And in that way it was a lovely idea =  
 57 [

58 Cath Yeah

59 TR1 = but I think at this level they need a lot more support =  
60 [

61 Cath Yeah

62 TR1 = than you gave them. Yeah?

63 Cath Right, right. So something written down, like prompts?

64 TR1 Yeah

65 Cath Yeah, "You are a doctor".

66 TR1 Yeah, "You've got strong views on =  
67 [

68 Cath Yeah (nods)

69 TR1 = people working hard" and so on, and things like that. So actually give them a  
70 role to play =

71 Cath (Nods)

72 TR1 = and so on. They're working much less on their own sort of language ability.  
73 Give them some guidance to direct them.

74 Cath Yeah (taking notes during above)

75 TR1 So that they can work a little bit.

76 Cath Yeah

77 (1.5 secs)

78 TR1 Anything else?

79 (1 sec)

80 TR1 Right.

81 [

82 Andrea That was the main thing that we were discussing just now. Another thing that  
83 I thought we should all be doing in this group, perhaps with a warmer, something  
84 at the beginning, actually get them moving straight away. It seems to be a bit  
85 static.

86 TR1 Mmm, it's good because the other thing that I was worried about really - was the  
87 pace.

88 Cath Yeah. Mmm (nods).

89 TR1 Yes? The thing seemed a bit dead.

90 Cath Yeah.

91 TR1 Can you =  
92 [

93 Cath Yes I felt that.  
94 [

95 TR1 = can you identify why?  
96 (1 sec)

97 Cath Erm, yeah it was quite slow moving. I found it quite difficult. I was saying cos  
98 erm they're such a different standard. I just noticed today these two over here are  
99 very very slow at working things out - whereas this lot over here, mean, the  
100 true/false they'd done it, you know, in about two minutes. I was kind of  
101 wondering how long to give them to do something and when to stop.  
102 (1 sec)

103 Lara I found that as well.

104 TR1 Mmm, what can we do about someone who answers every single general  
105 question?  
106 (laughter)

107 Andrea Stop them and nominate the other students.

108 TR1 I think we need a lot more nomination. That means you've got to know their  
109 names a lot better. Yes? But basically cos you haven't got time to ask a question  
110 and then go "Erm" then answer. You've got to really =  
111 [

112 Cath Yeah

113 TR1 = focus - because at the moment you've got one person who answers every  
114 single question. The others - they know she's going to answer.

115 Cath Yeah

116 TR1 So if you nominate people then slowly she'll catch on - she'll participate more.

117 Cath Yeah

118 TR1 I think we've got to keep it polite still.

119 Cath Yeah

120 TR1 But er I mean we can just say "Just a minute, Swava, let's see if anyone else  
121 knows" because er, you know, the others aren't really even being given a  
122 chance=

123 [

124 Cath Yeah

125 TR1 = to think if they know it.

126 Cath Yeah

127 TR1 They are fairly mixed ability but I think that can be quite good actually - mix

128 them up a bit.

129 Cath Yeah

130 (2 secs)

131 TR1 OK, where were we?

132 AndreaPace.

133 TR1 Pace, yes. How are we going to introduce pace here?

134 AndreaI think contrast very different activities one after another.

135 TR1 Yeah

136 AndreaAnd really trying to make it student centred.

137 TR1 I think I think your task didn't move in intensity.

138 Cath Yeah

139 TR1 The thing became more intense in terms of reading, but they were similar ones.

140 You had a skimming task which was sort of - they had to look at quite carefully

141 to do, and then they had the 'true/false' one, which really were actually two very

142 similar activities. What happened in your lesson plan? You had erm a jumbled,

143 er you were going to jumble it. We talked about it before.

144 Cath Yeah.

145 TR1 You changed your mind on that?

146 Cath I did cos I just thought if they use it afterwards they've got all these pieces of

147 paper (laughs).

148 (1 sec)

149 TR1 You can give them the complete text afterwards but

150 [

151 Cath Yeah, but we're trying to save

152 paper (laughs).

153 TR1 Yeah, I'm contradicting myself here aren't I? Erm yes.

154 Cath Yeah, I just thought - yeah (making notes).

155 TR1 It's just such a different activity.

156 Cath Yeah

157 TR1 It's got the sensory mobility skills =

158 [

159 Cath Exactly, yeah.

160 [

161 TR1 = that come into play =

162 Cath Yeah

163 [

164 TR1 = are very enjoyable ones, you know =

165 Cath Yeah

166 TR1 = and it becomes very much a problem-solving activity =

167 [

168 Cath Yeah

169 TR1 = rather than a reading activity.

170 Cath Yeah

171 TR1 And that change of activity brings back interest, brings back motivation and

172 changes the classroom atmosphere and, you know -

173 Cath Yeah.

174 TR1 You know, you can see - I think it might have been nice to have actually done

175 that but

176 [

177 Cath So do I. Yeah.

178 (1.5 secs)

179 TR1 I think if we're going to think in terms of your achievement of aim and =

180 [

181 Cath Mmm

182 TR1 = we've said so far that you did achieve your aim.

183 [

184 Cath Mmm

185 TR1 I think on one level you did. You had a well-staged skills lesson =

186 Cath Mmm

187 TR1 = which led up to a much greater understanding at the end than we had at the  
188 beginning.  
189 (1 sec)  
190 TR1 If you were to - describe that text =  
191 Cath Mmm  
192 [  
193 TR1 = to me, or to one of these, how would you describe? What kind of text was  
194 it?  
195 Cath (1 sec) Erm it was quite  
196 [  
197 TR1 Think of your first activity it terms of political =  
198 Cath Yeah  
199 [  
200 TR1 = and things like that.  
201 Cath Yeah, it was quite sensational, shocking.  
202 TR1 Sensational, shocking. Amusing? Humorous?  
203 Cath Yeah  
204 TR1 It's got quite a humorous style actually - it's supposed to be anyway.  
205 Cath Yeah.  
206 TR1 Erm, to what extent do you think you really got that out of the text?  
207 Cath I didn't think I did very well, no.  
208 TR1 Yeah, that's what I felt. Yeah. I felt here we've got a fantastic text  
209 [  
210 Cath Yeah. I felt that at  
211 the end  
212 [  
213 TR1 It's really, you know, can you imagine being on the same sheets for 56 years,  
214 you know, it's absolutely disgusting. Yeah? And there's quite a lot of humour in  
215 there =  
216 Cath Mmm  
217 [  
218 TR1 = you know, how much of that did the students get?

219 Cath I know. I really felt that was lost actually. At the end I was quite disappointed.

220 TR1 That's what I'd like them to have got from reading it.

221 Cath Mmm

222 TR1 I'd like them to have gone out with not only that this man stayed in bed for 56

223 years =

224 Cath Mmm

225 [

226 TR1 = surrounded by tins of baked beans and things =

227 Cath Mmm

228 [

229 TR1 = but that, you know, this was in fact a very funny piece of writing, but perhaps

230 even more, this was a shocking piece of writing.

231 Cath Mmm

232 TR1 How would you feel if you had to go into his room?

233 Cath Mmm

234 TR1 Yeah? Get it beyond these factual questions of how many years he was there,

235 who looked after him.

236 Cath Mmm

237 TR1 Get on to the supposition questions.

238 Cath Mmm (making notes)

239 TR1 You know, the work in the reading comprehension =

240 [

241 Cath Mmm

242 TR1 = session, Ann talked to you about levels of question.

243 Cath Yeah

244 TR1 So what we are trying to do here, even at this lower intermediate level, is, you

245 know, what's the style of this text? So raising their awareness in English.

246 Cath I think - yeah, I was really looking forward to them getting into the discussion

247 more. Towards the end I think it was a problem of trying to fit too much in, and

248 at the end there was just this five-minute slot where it would have been really

249 good - when they got into their role-play.

250 TR1 Yeah I think the basics are there =



251 Cath Yeah

252 [

253 TR1 = and I think we did achieve our aims in the sense that many classroom teachers

254 all over the world achieve their aims.

255 Cath Yeah

256 TR1 You know, basically, that's what most people do - most people concentrate on

257 the factual, the 'yes/no' question, the 'wh' question =

258 [

259 Cath Mmm

260 TR1 = and so on, but what about, you know, what about "What is this text really

261 saying?"

262 Cath Yeah

263 TR1 "Why did it make the newspaper?"

264 Cath Mmm

265 TR1 "Why did the people choose the text and put it in the book?"

266 Cath Yeah

267 TR1 Apart from the fact that it's got the present perfect in it.

268 Cath (laughs)

269 TR1 So

270 [

271 Lara Would you put in a bit more in because of their age? If they were elementary

272 would you look at the style of the text?

273 TR1 If I could, yes.

274 Lara Even so

275 [

276 Cath Because it personalises it doesn't it, "What do you feel about it?"

277 Lara But, but if they were really young?

278 TR1 I think we've got to say there's a cognitive element if this - but but children, I

279 mean, my daughter's eight and she recognises what's serious and what's

280 humorous and things like that, so I think we mustn't undervalue them in language

281 terms - well we can undervalue them in language terms in the sense that they're

282 not capable of certain things - we can limit what we want from them in terms of

283       their language ability but we mustn't limit what they're intellectually capable of.  
284       It's very easy to talk down to low level adults when they're physicists and  
285       goodness knows what else and intellectually very - OK. Funny, it seems to be me  
286       talking.  
287       (to general agreement)  
288  
289  
290

## APPENDIX 2: In-service Feedback Session

### Session A:

**Participants: Director of Studies - DOS1 (female) and teacher Sue (female)**

1 DOS1 So how did you feel the lesson went?

2 Sue Erm, generally quite well, yes. Erm, I felt that they understood. I mean,  
3 obviously they had prior knowledge, they had prior knowledge of the passive  
4 initially, the way they were able to click straight onto it and were able to find  
5 examples of it.

6 DOS1 Mmhuh

7 Sue I don't think they were overly confused by the end of the lesson. I think they  
8 seemed to reach the concept well and recognise it. They could use it. I'll take erm  
9 the writing bit they did, I'll take that in erm tomorrow.

10 DOS1 Right. That was their homework?

11 Sue They'll finish it off for homework, yes. Erm, so I'll make sure that's OK  
12 tomorrow.

13 DOS1 Mmhm

14 Sue Yes, I think it erm generally went OK.

15 DOS1 Yes, and it seemed to fit in with what you've been doing in the last couple of  
16 lessons as well.

17 Sue That's right.

18 DOS1 And the fact that you wanted to write the report afterwards.

19 Sue That's right, and I particularly chose the passive because I thought it was relevant  
20 for erm =

21 DOS1 Mmhm

22 Sue = erm, you know, what they've got to do next, which is, as soon as we've  
23 actually got all the results tables together, they've got to write the report of the  
24 results. So it's obviously important for that particular style of writing.

25 DOS1 Right. And you felt that by the end of the lesson they'd got to grips with it,  
26 they'd revised what they knew, and they could actually produce it quite quite  
27 well? (Sue is looking at DOS1 and nodding)

28 Sue I think so, yeah. Obviously I'll have my final proof tomorrow but I felt that they  
 29 they would be able to, yes.

30 DOS1 Mmhm. OK, and the other points that you put down there (referring to Sue's  
 31 self-evaluation sheet) - 'communication', 'rapport' and so on - how do you think  
 32 the class works together?

33 Sue I I think they work very well together. I think they they work quite well with me.  
 34 Erm.

35 DOS1 Yes

36 Sue I I mean they never, I mean, they're never afraid to ask questions if there's, you  
 37 know, a word they don't know or what - or anything like that.

38 DOS1 Mmhm

39 Sue They never feel they can't ask me, so I think, generally, I have quite good  
 40 rapport with them.

41 DOS1 Yes no. They work they work well together as well and they worked hard as well  
 42 during the lesson too.

43 Sue Yes, they did work hard - seeing it was nine o'clock or nine fifteen on a Thursday  
 44 morning, yeah.

45 DOS1 Yeah they do. There's a nice atmosphere - I've written that down. (DOS1 refers  
 46 to her evaluation sheet) They work well together and I had a look in their files  
 47 and so on and they've done lots of grammar, lots of vocabulary and they seem to  
 48 have done a lot of skills work and so on - authentic materials - you've exploited  
 49 that as well and I mean they're they're good, they are very good. =

50 Sue (laughs)

51 DOS1 = They didn't seem to have a lot of problems with it at all.

52 Sue No, no, that's right.

53 DOS1 Mmhm

54 Sue Yeah

55 DOS1 OK, what did you put on the other side, (referring to Sue's sheet). Yes, that you  
 56 changed variety.

57 Sue Yes, I tried I tried to give a variety. Yeah, I mean - maybe we could have done  
 58 more oral stuff but I thought the oral stuff was really needed more at the start and  
 59 plus =

60 DOS1 Mmhm

61 Sue = what they're actually going to do with it - it's going to be a written piece of the

62 passive =

63 DOS1 Right

64 [

65 Sue = as opposed to oral, so I thought it better that we if they had a little more of a

66 text to transfer into the passive, to give them (gestures)

67 DOS1 Mmhm

68 Sue I mean - OK it's slightly artificial, cos it's they're obviously not creating it, but I

69 thought it'd be reasonable written practice just to finish off.

70 DOS1 Yes, yes. And the material (referring to Sue's sheet) - you felt that was the right

71 level and so on for them.

72 Sue Yeah, I mean er this was maybe the, you know, the gap-fill was maybe slightly

73 below their level but

74 [

75 DOS1 This one or the

76 [

77 Sue This, this I thought served the purpose as a basic

78 introduction.

79 DOS1 Mmhm

80 Sue When they first starting producing the sentences they weren't in the passive.

81 DOS1 Right

82 Sue They did actually grasp, you know, they followed the sort of model.

83 DOS1 Mmhm

84 Sue The gap-fills, I think gap-fills are erm generally a kind of an easy way just to

85 reinforce the point.

86 DOS1 Yes

87 Sue Just to start. I'd never finish with a gap-fill but I think they've =

88 [

89 DOS1 Yeah yeah.

90 Sue = got their own role.

91 DOS1 The gap-fill? You mean this on the other side of - the exercise?

92 Sue Yes. But then, but then again, because it was because it was doing because it was  
 93 using all the tenses not just sort of =  
 94 [   
 95 DOS1 Mmhm  
 96 Sue = you know, the basic present perfect and simple past, the fact that erm they had  
 97 things like 'is being built' or =  
 98 [   
 99 DOS1 Yes  
 100 Sue = things like that.  
 101 DOS1 No, I mean, I thought that was, yes that was good. That was about their level.  
 102 Sue And also the 'get' as well. Cos it's important that they know sort of idiomatic  
 103 language that they never  
 104 DOS1 Mmhm  
 105 Sue So, yeah, yeah it was  
 106 DOS1 Mmm  
 107 Sue Yeah. Mmhm. And then obviously that's that's an article that came from the  
 108 Guardian.  
 109 DOS1 Right, yes.  
 110 Sue So it's an authentic newspaper article, so  
 111 DOS1 Uhuh OK. Erm (pause - refers to her notes) Yeah, I think I just wondered  
 112 whether you could have used this as a warmer at the beginning of the class, just  
 113 to get them speaking - cos it was quite a heavy grammar lesson and, as you said,  
 114 they use the passive mainly for writing more than anything else - erm whether one  
 115 of them could have had picture A, one of them have picture B. They could have  
 116 talked together, found the differences between the two pictures = (Sue is  
 117 nodding throughout)  
 118 Sue Uhuh  
 119 DOS1 = and then you could have elicited the passive after that =  
 120 [   
 121 Sue Yeah  
 122 DOS1 = from them.  
 123 (1.5 secs)

124 DOS1 Erm, but erm, you wrote everything up on the blackboard. You gave them the  
 125 meaning, the form. Erm, do you try to use the students sometimes, to get the  
 126 form and the meaning out of them?

127 Sue Mm yeah.

128 DOS1 Just to elicit the difference, you know, erm the different tenses and the different  
 129 ..?

130 [

131 Sue Yeah, the descriptions of what grammatical things are.

132 DOS1 Yeah

133 Sue (inaudible) Yeah, I do often do that. Yeah.

134 DOS1 Yes, I mean, I think with this one, erm I wondered whether you could have  
 135 maybe put the erm the passive, you could you could have highlighted the form  
 136 first, erm and got them to give you the different tenses. Then maybe ask them  
 137 using an example sentence, ask them whether they could gi tell you the difference  
 138 -between the active and the passive - = (Sue is looking at DOS1 but not  
 139 nodding)

140 Sue Uhuh

141 DOS1 = from there rather than just write it on the board - this is the meaning, and then  
 142 you know =

143 [

144 Sue Yeah, yeah, yeah.

145 DOS1 "Could you give me an example?" =

146 [

147 Sue Yeah

148 DOS1 = then and involve them a bit more in the actual rules. Yeah?

149 Sue Yeah yeah. Well, I'll do that again another

150 DOS1 Yes, erm (refers to Sue's lesson plan/materials) with this one, I mean, this is this  
 151 is good. I liked the worksheet and the fact that it was it was it was definitely at  
 152 their level.

153 Sue Uhuh

154 DOS1 Cos you can spend quite a long time looking around for exercises =

155 [

156 Sue Mmm

157 DOS1 = that are quite advanced and actually erm require them to produce =

158 [

159 Sue Mmm

160 DOS1 = a certain amount of vocabulary =

161 Sue (Nods)

162 DOS1 = and this here - they had to come up with quite a lot of words by themselves that

163 wasn't just, it wasn't that straightforward.

164 Sue Yes, exactly.

165 DOS1 And I thought that was that was, that was good. That was really at their level and

166 they had to think about it.

167 Sue (Nods)

168 DOS1 Erm, (pause - refers to notes) I just wondered with this, instead of maybe just

169 reading through =

170 Sue (Nods)

171 DOS1 = it erm whether you could have gap-filled =

172 [

173 Sue Yes. Right.

174 DOS1 = this? Just to erm make sure that they really knew what the different forms =

175 [

176 Sue Right

177 DOS1 = were.

178 Sue (Nods)

179 DOS1 Because here because here, yes it's obvious they know the the active, but maybe

180 if you had gap-filled the

181 [

182 Sue As an introduction to the other tenses. Yeah.

183 DOS1 Yeah and if you'd gap-filled those and they had to just put it in and you would

184 have been able to check then that they really were sure that the present

185 continuous of 'are washing' is 'is being washed', 'had washed', 'had been

186 washing'.

187 Sue Yeah



188 DOS1 And then using the future and the modal verbs =  
189 [

190 Sue Mmm. Yeah.

191 DOS1 = which sometimes present problems, even for the advanced ones.

192 Sue Yeah

193 DOS1 But no, I mean, it was, they they were referring back to it =  
194 [

195 Sue Yeah

196 DOS1 = afterwards and they were working well together - they were asking each other  
197 questions.

198 Sue Yeah, I thought it was handy to have a sort of list like this, you know, where it  
199 was just sort of

200 DOS1 Yes, I mean, it's  
201 [

202 Sue It's not just dealing with the present perfect.

203 DOS1 Yeah, yeah, exactly. And then because they've got it in front of them as well then  
204 they can look back and they can work on their own and they don't have to  
205 continue to ask you for the for the answer. They can work together. They can  
206 look back. (Sue nodding throughout)

207 Sue Uhuh

208 DOS1 And you can just point it out to them.

209 Sue Yeah

210 DOS1 So that was that was fine. It was good.  
211 (1 sec)

212 DOS1 And erm but you were going round. You were monitoring what they were doing,  
213 and that was nice, and they er could ask you the questions - no problems at all.  
214 And you went over there and you dealt with all of their problems very efficiently,  
215 and but they do work well together, and they are they are good. (Sue nodding  
216 throughout)

217 Sue Mmm

218 DOS1 And they do use each other. They're not continually running to you for  
219 [

220 Sue They will

221 ask, yeah, correct each other, which is good.

222 DOS1 Uhuh. And

223 [

224 Sue I was trying to encourage them, to kind of, you know, check answers

225 with each other first before always coming to a group feedback.

226 DOS1 Yeah, yeah, yeah. And erm with this one here - erm what was your main aim in

227 using this this newspaper article?

228 Sue Erm to provide them to provide them with an authentic example of how it's really

229 used in English.

230 DOS1 Uhuh

231 Sue I mean, rather than, you know, these sort of things which as I say, they serve

232 their purpose very well, but they're quite sort of artificial, I mean this is the sort

233 of thing that erm they will see in the in the British press, and also from the point

234 of they're going to be having to write in this sort of register when they do their

235 reports. So I thought it would be good for them to see it in in that sort of

236 setting.

237 DOS1 Uhuh

238 Sue And also to show that they do actually, they can actually identify it =

239 [

240 DOS1 Right

241 Sue = in a text setting.

242 DOS1 Uhuh and you didn't think of using it erm for some form of skills practice er as

243 well? Maybe giving them erm a few gist questions to read through so that

244 they =

245 Sue Yeah

246 [

247 DOS1 = so that they actually had some er some understanding of the passage before

248 they went through and underlined the passive?

249 Sue Yeah. I think that would be more a sort of time constraint =

250 DOS1 Uhuh

251 Sue = the fact that we've got an hour and that we've got the notices to do at the

252 start.

253 DOS1 Yeah

254 Sue Yeah, certainly. If I had if I had an hour and a half lesson I would do some sort of  
255 introduction to the text.

256 DOS1 Yes, yes. Because I did wonder whether maybe they could've erm used the text  
257 to write a few questions. I don't know - maybe written a few questions where  
258 examples of the passive would have come out.

259 Sue Uhuh

260 DOS1 And they would have been using it more productively.

261 Sue Right

262 DOS1 Each of them could have written four or five questions about the about the text,  
263 and then er with a different partner, er turn the piece of paper over, asked a few  
264 questions and see whether the others could remember the text and give an  
265 answer. (Sue nodding throughout)

266 Sue Uhuh

267 DOS1 I just wondered whether you could have exploited it maybe =  
268 [

269 Sue Mmm

270 DOS1 = a bit more

271 Sue Uhuh

272 DOS1 But yes. I see what you mean - the fact that you've only got an hour, and then  
273 the lesson was rapidly coming to an end, and so they actually couldn't do very  
274 much more.

275 Sue Yeah

276 DOS1 But erm no. But, I mean, I thought that as far as the lesson went it was it was  
277 great. They worked a lot. They worked together. They seemed to have covered a  
278 lot of work in class as well. They've done a lot of grammar, a lot of vocabulary,  
279 and erm by the end of the lesson they really had did seem to have got to grips  
280 with the passive. And you gave them some homework so that you can then check  
281 whether they've erm whether they really have er grasped it or not. And then  
282 when they actually come to writing their reports they'll see that it's useful = (Sue  
283 nodding throughout)

284 Sue (Laughs)  
285 DOS1 = and so, and they they'll be able to produce it and you can then see if they really  
286 have got to grips with it or not.  
287 Sue That's right. Yes.  
288 DOS1 But no they're a nice class, really lovely.  
289 Sue I know. I'm very very lucky.  
290 DOS1 OK

### **APPENDIX 3: PRE-SERVICE FEEDBACK SESSIONS - TRAINERS AND TRAINEES**

#### **Details of the participants**

The participants in the pre-service sessions were taking part in teacher training courses leading to the CTEFLA (Certificate for Teaching English as a Foreign Language to Adults). The courses were held at The Bell Language School, Cambridge. The trainers on the courses were employed by this school. The awarding body for the qualification was UCLES (University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate).

There are eight trainers (three men and five women), and thirty two trainees (twenty women and twelve men) in the data sample. The sessions took place between August 1992 and March 1993, in eight periods of 40-60 minutes. There were two sessions in each period: Sessions 1 and 9; 2 and 10; 3 and 11; 4 and 12; 5 and 13; 6 and 14; 7 and 15; 8 and 16. Within each period the same trainer and the same four trainees were present. In each of the sessions one trainee was given feedback on his or her lesson. The feedback given to five male and eleven female trainees was recorded, transcribed and analysed - see Table 1.

The sixteen pre-service sessions are numbered 1 to 16. Trainers are identified by **TR1- 8**. The trainees are referred to by names (which are not their true names).

Sessions	Trainer	Gender	Age	Trainee	Gender	Age
1 and 9	TR1	male	42	Cath	female	24
				Polly	female	27
2 and 10	TR2	female	28	Fran	female	23
				Ruth	female	27
3 and 11	TR3	male	35	Sandra	female	41
				David	male	37
4 and 12	TR4	female	34	Alice	female	28
				Frank	male	32
5 and 13	TR5	female	38	Dawn	female	30
				Dina	female	26
6 and 14	TR6	female	32	Roger	male	28
				Yasmin	female	39
7 and 15	TR7	female	29	Jill	female	43
				Alex	male	24
8 and 16	TR8	male	46	Naomi	female	25
				Graham	male	24

Table 1.

Immediately after each session the trainees who were given feedback in the recorded session were given a questionnaire to fill in and return within a week - see Table 7. Within a few days of the feedback session the trainers were interviewed.

### **Interview questions asked of the trainers**

These are the main questions asked of all the trainers whose feedback sessions had been recorded.

- 1      How did you decide which points to focus on?
- 2      Do you think the feedback you gave on this lesson was generally positive or negative? Why?
- 3      Do you think the trainee showed a positive or negative attitude to the feedback you gave?
- 4      What were your aims for the feedback session? What did you want to happen?
- 5      To what extent did you feel you achieved your aims? Did you do what you wanted to do?
- 6      Do you feel your relationship with the trainee to be 'special' when you are giving feedback? How would you describe the relationship?

Interview 1.

### **Summary of responses given by the trainers to the interview questions**

There follows in Tables 2 - 6, after each question, a summary of the responses given by the trainers to the questions I asked. The responses to Question 4 and 5 have been combined in Table 5.

**Q1 How did you decide which points to focus on?**

<b>Session</b>	<b>Trainer</b>	<b>Trainee</b>	<b>Summary of Comments</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>TR1</b>	<b>Cath</b>	Aims - as this is important to get for all lessons and Cath is not very strong in this area. She wasn't sure why she was doing the activity. I find if you can get them to understand aims then they are half way there.
<b>9</b>	<b>TR1</b>	<b>Polly</b>	As it was a listening lesson - checking that she had the basic procedures - which she had.
<b>2</b>	<b>TR2</b>	<b>Fran</b>	It was difficult to decide as the whole lesson was not very good . I tried to focus on the speaking activity as it was not well set up.
<b>10</b>	<b>TR2</b>	<b>Ruth</b>	The presentation of the grammar because this was the main aim of the lesson.
<b>3</b>	<b>TR3</b>	<b>Sandra</b>	Setting up the activities and structuring it so the students get on with it on their own. Sandra doesn't like to let go.
<b>11</b>	<b>TR3</b>	<b>David</b>	Classroom management as it followed on from Sandra's lesson - David also needs to hand over more to the students.
<b>4</b>	<b>TR4</b>	<b>Alice</b>	Alice is not aware that her manner with the students is too authoritarian . I was trying to get her to see how she could be more sensitive to individuals.
<b>12</b>	<b>TR4</b>	<b>Frank</b>	I was just checking on board work and presentation of materials as Frank is fun but untidy.
<b>5</b>	<b>TR5</b>	<b>Dawn</b>	The points Dawn needs to focus on if she is going to get a 'B' - less of her and more of the students.
<b>13</b>	<b>TR5</b>	<b>Dina</b>	Dina might fail so I'm trying to help her get the basics without destroying her confidence.
<b>6</b>	<b>TR6</b>	<b>Roger</b>	Nothing specific today as it was a good lesson - just making sure he doesn't go off at a tangent.



<b>14</b>	<b>TR6</b>	<b>Yasmin</b>	Yasmin gets anxious so I try to concentrate on the good points as she is going to pass - she has the basics.
<b>7</b>	<b>TR7</b>	<b>Jill</b>	The points she needs to get right before she can be sure of passing - particularly needs to work on understanding the grammar.
<b>15</b>	<b>TR7</b>	<b>Alex</b>	Alex is struggling to reach a pass standard - I needed to point out why the students were confused. He didn't really understand what he was doing.
<b>8</b>	<b>TR8</b>	<b>Naomi</b>	Naomi is a weak pass at the moment - I needed to point out the way the structure of the lesson could have been improved - it was not well-planned.
<b>16</b>	<b>TR8</b>	<b>Graham</b>	No specific points - just small ones to do with instructions. He's basically sound and will pass easily.

Table 2.

**Q2 Do you think the feedback you gave on this lesson was generally positive or negative? Why?**

<b>Session</b>	<b>Trainer</b>	<b>Trainee</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>TR1</b>	<b>Cath</b>	Generally positive - I tried to make her see the good points of her lesson.
<b>9</b>	<b>TR1</b>	<b>Polly</b>	Positive - there was not much wrong with this lesson.
<b>2</b>	<b>TR2</b>	<b>Fran</b>	I hope it was positive though there were a lot of things to say so it may have seemed rather critical.
<b>10</b>	<b>TR2</b>	<b>Ruth</b>	Positive - there were a lot of good things about the lesson.
<b>3</b>	<b>TR3</b>	<b>Sandra</b>	Positive I think - she needs her confidence boosting.
<b>11</b>	<b>TR3</b>	<b>David</b>	Positive - though I hope certain things I wanted to say got across.
<b>4</b>	<b>TR4</b>	<b>Alice</b>	Not sure - I was trying to raise Alice's awareness - it may have come across quite negatively but she's got to take those points on board if she is going to pass.
<b>12</b>	<b>TR4</b>	<b>Frank</b>	Positive in general - just a few points to make.
<b>5</b>	<b>TR5</b>	<b>Dawn</b>	Positive - this was a good lesson on the whole.
<b>13</b>	<b>TR5</b>	<b>Dina</b>	Positive - she needs her confidence boosting.
<b>6</b>	<b>TR6</b>	<b>Roger</b>	Positive - no need to be otherwise.
<b>14</b>	<b>TR6</b>	<b>Yasmin</b>	Positive - Yasmin responds better - she's self-critical enough.
<b>7</b>	<b>TR7</b>	<b>Jill</b>	Positive - though there was a lot to say.
<b>15</b>	<b>TR7</b>	<b>Alex</b>	Positive - though I had to be quite critical so he is in no doubt where he stands.
<b>8</b>	<b>TR8</b>	<b>Naomi</b>	Positive I hope, though there were points about the structure of the lesson I had to make.
<b>16</b>	<b>TR8</b>	<b>Graham</b>	Positive - no problems.

Table 3.

**Q3 Do you think the trainee/teacher showed a positive or negative attitude to the feedback you gave?**

<b>Session</b>	<b>Trainer</b>	<b>Trainee</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>TR1</b>	<b>Cath</b>	Positive
<b>9</b>	<b>TR1</b>	<b>Polly</b>	Positive
<b>2</b>	<b>TR2</b>	<b>Fran</b>	Rather negative
<b>10</b>	<b>TR2</b>	<b>Ruth</b>	Positive
<b>3</b>	<b>TR3</b>	<b>Sandra</b>	Positive
<b>11</b>	<b>TR3</b>	<b>David</b>	Positive
<b>4</b>	<b>TR4</b>	<b>Alice</b>	Positive
<b>12</b>	<b>TR4</b>	<b>Frank</b>	Positive
<b>5</b>	<b>TR5</b>	<b>Dawn</b>	Positive
<b>13</b>	<b>TR5</b>	<b>Dina</b>	Positive
<b>6</b>	<b>TR6</b>	<b>Roger</b>	Very positive
<b>14</b>	<b>TR6</b>	<b>Yasmin</b>	Positive
<b>7</b>	<b>TR7</b>	<b>Jill</b>	a bit of both
<b>15</b>	<b>TR7</b>	<b>Alex</b>	Generally positive
<b>8</b>	<b>TR8</b>	<b>Naomi</b>	Positive
<b>16</b>	<b>TR8</b>	<b>Graham</b>	Positive

Table 4.

**Q4** What were your aims for the feedback session? What did you want to happen?

**Q5** To what extent did you feel you achieved your aims? Did you do what you wanted to do?

Session	Trainer	Trainees	Comments
1 and 9	TR1	Cath Polly	<b>Q4:</b> At this stage I want them to have good idea of where they are up to and what they have to do to pass or get a 'B' if they can. I try to pick up on points that are useful to all the people in the group but make sure that they understand any real problems they have.
			<b>Q5:</b> I think I managed to do what I wanted to do. We ran out of time a bit with Cath's feedback but she seemed to get the main points, she was making notes, and was quite cheerful at the end.  Polly was fine - she took on board the small points I made and showed good self-awareness.
2 and 10	TR2	Fran Ruth	<b>Q4:</b> We have to let candidates know whether they are reaching the right standard and this is quite tricky if they don't seem to be making any progress. Fran may well fail and I was trying to make her aware of her basic problems. With Ruth it's a matter of just picking up on small points as she is basically OK.
	TR2		<b>Q5:</b> I don't think I was very successful in helping Fran understand where she is going wrong. She's not very forthcoming and I don't think she took in much today. Ruth was fine so I felt that I gave her enough guidance.

<b>3 and 11</b>	<b>TR3</b>	<b>Sandra David</b>	<b>Q4:</b> Often it's a matter of getting the trainees to have more confidence and trust themselves to relax with the students. At this stage I try to pick up on major points only, unless there is a real problem - if the trainee is not making the grade.
			<b>Q5:</b> I feel quite happy about how things went - Sandra is getting more confident and should be a safe pass. I hope I convinced her she's going OK. David is not a problem and I don't need to say too much - just not let him get complacent.
<b>4 and 12</b>	<b>TR4</b>	<b>Alice Frank</b>	<b>Q4:</b> Alice and Frank are quite different people and in the way they teach - particularly in the way they treat the students. It's difficult to take a common theme without seeming to praise one and criticise the other. But I do have to make Alice understand why she can't deal with the students the way she does. I was concentrating on 'rapport' in the session today.
			<b>Q5:</b> I'm not sure how well I managed to get my points over with Alice - she thinks her manner is fine but I think that if she doesn't improve I can't recommend a pass. It's basically a difference of opinion and she doesn't understand why what she's doing is wrong.
<b>5 and 13</b>	<b>TR5</b>	<b>Dawn Dina</b>	<b>Q4:</b> My aims in this session were to encourage Dina to see where she is going wrong without making her give up. With Dawn it's a matter of honing her skills so she can realise her potential.
			<b>Q5:</b> I'm not sure I was successful with Dina as it was another weak lesson, especially in comparison with Dawn's. It's difficult to get her to see where

			she is going wrong precisely.
<b>6 and 14</b>	<b>TR6</b>	<b>Roger Yasmin</b>	<b>Q4:</b> As both lessons were good I planned to build on their performances and suggest ways in which they could be improved in small ways.
			<b>Q5:</b> This was a successful session - both trainees were receptive to suggestions and the observing trainees came up with some good ideas too. I just had to make sure that everyone had a chance to make their contributions.
<b>7 and 15</b>	<b>TR7</b>	<b>Jill Alex</b>	<b>Q4:</b> Neither of these two are strong candidates so I planned to spend quite a lot of time going over some of the basics - both for a grammar lesson and a skills lesson for this level of students (beginners). They are both going to have to improve quickly to be sure of passing.
			<b>Q5:</b> Not a very satisfactory session as I probably tried to cover too much of what they should already know from the input sessions. Everyone gets very tired at the end of the day.
<b>8 and 16</b>	<b>TR8</b>	<b>Naomi Graham</b>	<b>Q4:</b> I aimed to help Naomi see why her lack of planning resulted in a rather confused lesson. With Graham I wanted to point out a few small additions.
			<b>Q5:</b> I think I was fairly successful in helping Naomi though it took a long time sorting things out. The session with Graham was fine as he is quite self-aware and took on suggestions cheerfully.

Table 5.

**Q6 Do you feel your relationship with the trainee/teacher to be 'special' when you are giving feedback? How would you describe the relationship?**

<b>Trainer</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<b>TR1</b>	Yes, it's special in that I'm the trainer in charge. I know what they need to do well in the course and I am the person who can help them succeed. I'm their teacher but also a bit of counsellor - trying to see what will motivate and help them.
<b>TR2</b>	Yes, as a fairly new trainer I am conscious that I have to get a lot across in a very short time - my problem is probably trying to get in too much rather than letting them come to it themselves. There's quite a lot of pressure to make sure the trainees know where they stand so they can't say afterwards that they didn't know they were failing.
<b>TR3</b>	Obviously I am the person with more experience in the business and I know what they need to do to pass. I'm both trainer and judge. But I hope they also see me as a friend who they can talk to if they are worried.
<b>TR4</b>	Yes - during TP I'm their tutor so the relationship is different in that way. We have to be quite up-front about how they are doing as we are accountable to the scheme - to be objective. So it's an 'official' role as well as friendly helper.
<b>TR5</b>	I'm conscious always of playing two roles - that of adviser and helper - friend, and that of examiner. At the end of the day it's my opinion that counts towards them passing or failing.
<b>TR6</b>	Yes, its still being a teacher in the usual way but it's difficult not to get emotionally involved because it's such a short, intensive course. A lot of the trainees are paying for the course themselves and it's very important to them. It's important to stay professional and objective at times - especially if the trainees are similar in age and could be friends in other circumstances.
<b>TR7</b>	It is a special role in that I am the trainer and they are just starting on this career. But I can remember when I was in their position - it doesn't seem so long ago. I try to be approachable but not let them get too dependent.

<b>TR8</b>	Yes, my job is to give them as much professional help as possible. To give them what they need to succeed and get value for their money. I'm also responsible to the Bell to keep up the standards of the course and to make sure we make proper recommendations to UCLES about grades - not to get carried away because we like the people and want them to pass.
------------	--

Table 6.

### Questionnaire given to trainees on pre-service course

I am doing research on feedback. Could you spend a few minutes completing this questionnaire. I promise that your remarks will be received in the strictest confidence. I will not pass on any of the information you may give individually, to your tutor or to any other member of the teacher training team.

I would like your opinion of the feedback on your lesson that you received during this session. Could you please tick/complete these statements as appropriate.

- 1 I found the session as a whole useful.
- 2 I did not find the session, as a whole, very useful.
- 3 I found the feedback given by the tutor on my lesson useful.
- 4 I did not find the feedback given by the tutor on my lesson very useful.
- 5 While the tutor was giving me feedback I felt ....
- 6 Now, after feedback, I feel ....

Any other comments?

Questionnaire 1.



### **Trainees' responses to the questionnaire**

The following responses were received from the trainees whose lessons were observed, and who received feedback in the sessions which were recorded. For the questions see Questionnaire 1, immediately above.

<b>Session</b>	<b>Trainer</b>	<b>Trainee</b>	<b>Trainee's comments</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>TR1 (male)</b>	<b>Cath</b>	Ticked 1 and 3  5. .... a bit sensitive.  6. .... encouraged, determined to do better next time.  We have just changed TP tutors. The present is much more helpful because he encourages us and gives very constructive criticism e.g. future strategies, rather than dwelling on the things that went wrong.
<b>9</b>	<b>TR1 (male)</b>	<b>Polly</b>	Ticked 1 and 3.  5. .... that he was understanding and I appreciated the suggestions which were made for improvement.  6. .... glad that the lesson and the feedback is over because I wasn't very happy with my lesson plan before I started.  I look forward to doing a better lesson next time.
<b>2</b>	<b>TR2 (female)</b>	<b>Fran</b>	Ticked 1 and 4.  5. .... Quite upset about my lesson.  6. .... depressed.  Although the criticism given was in the main constructive, I felt much of it was discouraging - it won't help me do a better lesson.

<b>10</b>	<b>TR2 (female)</b>	<b>Ruth</b>	<p>Ticked 1 and 3.</p> <p>5. .... that I should have known exactly what was wrong with my class.</p> <p>6. .... fine. I'm glad I've got something to work on in my next lesson. I would have been happy to have had some more criticism at some stage. I didn't think I was being led in the right direction.</p>
<b>3</b>	<b>TR3 (male)</b>	<b>Sandra</b>	<p>Ticked 1 and 3.</p> <p>5. .... encouraged.</p> <p>6. .... very clear about where I'd gone wrong.</p> <p>As usual with (TR3) - he's very understanding and helps us feel good as well as helping us. The feedback sessions have always been extremely useful. Sometimes, at the end of the day, we need a word or two of encouragement and also we need to know what went wrong.</p>
<b>11</b>	<b>TR3 (male)</b>	<b>David</b>	<p>Ticked 1 and 3.</p> <p>5. .... reasonably confident. OK. Relaxed - able to focus on mistakes.</p> <p>6. .... I know what I did right and wrong. Able to reconcile faults with aims of lesson.</p> <p>I feel quite good about the feedback we're getting. I personally never object to constructive criticism when in a relaxed atmosphere and pertinent to what you're trying to achieve.</p>
<b>4</b>	<b>TR4 (female)</b>	<b>Alice</b>	<p>Ticked 2 and 4.</p> <p>5. .... frustrated.</p> <p>6. .... I'm still not very happy with the way feedback went.</p> <p>I don't think feedback was very helpful tonight - too negative.</p>

<b>12</b>	<b>TR4 (female)</b>	<b>Frank</b>	<p>Ticked 1 and 3.</p> <p>5. .... fine.</p> <p>6. .... fine.</p> <p>No problems. I feel we're getting good guidance.</p>
<b>5</b>	<b>TR5 (female)</b>	<b>Dawn</b>	<p>Ticked 1 and 3.</p> <p>5. .... fine at first. Later I realised quite a lot of things weren't right.</p> <p>6. .... OK I think. I know what I've got to work on.</p> <p>(TR5) is very encouraging and clear.</p>
<b>13</b>	<b>TR5 (female)</b>	<b>Dina</b>	<p>Ticked 1 and 3.</p> <p>5. .... a bit down because I know I timed it badly.</p> <p>6. .... still a bit angry with myself.</p> <p>As usual (TR5) was very good at picking up what we need to do for the future.</p>
<b>6</b>	<b>TR6 (female)</b>	<b>Roger</b>	<p>Ticked 1 and 3.</p> <p>5. .... good. The others are very supportive and helpful</p> <p>6. .... fine. I was reasonably happy with my lesson.</p> <p>(TR6) came up with some very good suggestions which I'll use in the future.</p>
<b>14</b>	<b>TR6 (female)</b>	<b>Yasmin</b>	<p>Ticked 1 and 3.</p> <p>5. .... a bit apprehensive.</p> <p>6. .... quite happy.</p> <p>I like this tutor much better than last week's.</p>
<b>7</b>	<b>TR7 (female)</b>	<b>Jill</b>	<p>Ticked 1 and 3.</p> <p>5. .... vulnerable, and not very happy. I didn't do a very good lesson.</p> <p>6. .... OK.</p> <p>I know what I did wrong - I'll do better next time. I think this feedback is essential to learning how to teach properly.</p>

<b>15</b>	<b>TR7 (female)</b>	<b>Alex</b>	<p>Ticked 1 and 3.</p> <p>5. .... OK, though (TR7) had quite a few comments to make.</p> <p>6. .... OK. I wasn't very successful today but (TR7) made some good points.</p>
<b>8</b>	<b>TR8 (male)</b>	<b>Naomi</b>	<p>Ticked 1 and 3.</p> <p>5. .... quite good at first, not so happy later.</p> <p>6. .... a bit down, the criticism was a bit much, but good for me I suppose.</p>
<b>16</b>	<b>TR8 (male)</b>	<b>Graham</b>	<p>Ticked 1 and 3.</p> <p>5. .... fine.</p> <p>6. .... quite good.</p> <p>I got lots of useful tips.</p>

Table 7.

## APPENDIX 4: IN-SERVICE FEEDBACK SESSIONS - DIRECTORS OF STUDIES AND TEACHERS

### Details of the participants

The in-service sessions in this study are those in which academic managers (Directors of Studies) observe and give feedback to teachers on a one-to-one basis. All the Directors of Studies and teachers in this study were employed by the Bell Educational Trust, to work on short courses for children and teenagers (age range from 8-17) who were studying English in the UK. Six Directors of Studies (two men and four women) and nine teachers (three men and six women) were recorded between March and August 1995. Nine separate complete feedback sessions were recorded, each on average 25 minutes long. The nine in-service sessions are referred to by letter: A - I. The DOSs are referred to by **DOS1-6**, and occasionally by (fictitious) name. The teachers are referred to by names which are not their true names.

Session	DOS	Gender	Age	Teacher	Gender	Age
A	DOS 1	female	29	Sue	female	26
E	DOS1	female	29	Adrian	male	33
B	DOS2	male	48	John	male	25
G	DOS2	male	48	Anna	female	24
C	DOS3	female	28	Judy	female	30
D	DOS4	female	35	Jack	male	56
F	DOS4	female	35	Donna	female	37
H	DOS5	male	34	Wanda	female	29
I	DOS6	female	42	Clare	female	27

Table 8.

Immediately after each session the teachers who were given feedback in the recorded session were given a questionnaire to fill in and return within a week - see Table 14.

Within a few days of the feedback session the Directors of Studies were interviewed.

### **Interview questions asked of the Directors of Studies**

These are the main questions asked of all the Directors of Studies whose feedback sessions had been recorded.

- 1      How did you decide which points to focus on?
- 2      Do you think the feedback you gave on this lesson was generally positive or negative? Why?
- 3      Do you think the teacher showed a positive or negative attitude to the feedback you gave?
- 4      What were your aims for the feedback session? What did you want to happen?
- 5      To what extent did you feel you achieved your aims? Did you do what you wanted to do?
- 6      Do you feel your relationship with the teacher to be 'special' when you are giving feedback? How would you describe the relationship?

Interview 2.

### Summary of responses given by the Directors of Studies to the interview questions

There follows in Tables 9 - 13, after each question, a summary of the responses given by the DOSs to the questions I asked. The responses to Question 4 and 5 have been combined in Table 12.

#### Q1 How did you decide which points to focus on?

Session	DOS	Teacher	Teacher's Comments
A	DOS1 (Amy)	Sue	I asked her what she wanted me to focus on. She did not ask me to focus on material but I thought it important to do so.
E	DOS1 (Amy)	Adrian	I asked him what he wanted me to focus on. We also had the feedback form as a checklist.
B	DOS2 (Richard)	John	John is doing well so nothing in particular - I wanted to see how he perceived the lesson.
G	DOS2 (Richard)	Anna	I wanted to focus on the good points as Anna is a new teacher and needs some support.
C	DOS3 (Rosie)	Judy	To give support to Judy with her group of all Japanese. Talk about the advantages and disadvantages.
D	DOS4 (Sonya)	Jack	To focus on ways he can get this monolingual group more involved and contributing more.
F	DOS4 (Sonya)	Donna	To go through the checklist and discuss together what worked for the students.
H	DOS5 (Gerry)	Wanda	I decided to focus on pair work as it was the only weak part of the lesson.
I	DOS6 (Jackie)	Clare	In retrospect I didn't really focus on anything specific.

Table 9.

**Q2 Do you think the feedback you gave on this lesson was generally positive or negative? Why?**

<b>Session</b>	<b>DOS</b>	<b>Teacher</b>	<b>Teacher's Comments</b>
<b>A</b>	<b>DOS1 (Amy)</b>	<b>Sue</b>	Positive - I focused on the good parts of the lesson first before I made a few suggestions about how she could have used the article. Being negative would be counter-productive.
<b>E</b>	<b>DOS1 (Amy)</b>	<b>Adrian</b>	Positive - I try to support good practice.
<b>B</b>	<b>DOS2 (Richard)</b>	<b>John</b>	Positive - it was a good lesson.
<b>G</b>	<b>DOS2 (Richard)</b>	<b>Anna</b>	Positive - she needs encouragement.
<b>C</b>	<b>DOS3 (Rosie)</b>	<b>Judy</b>	Positive - Judy is a good teacher so there were many good points to make.
<b>D</b>	<b>DOS4 (Sonya)</b>	<b>Jack</b>	I think it was positive though we seemed to get bogged down in quite a bit of nit-picking detail.
<b>F</b>	<b>DOS4 (Sonya)</b>	<b>Donna</b>	Positive - I think. Donna can be quite defensive so it's best to be positive as much as possible.
<b>H</b>	<b>DOS5 (Gerry)</b>	<b>Wanda</b>	Positive - though I did have some points to make.
<b>I</b>	<b>DOS6 (Jackie)</b>	<b>Clare</b>	Positive - perhaps a bit too much. I think I'm rather afraid of upsetting teachers sometimes.

Table 10.



**Q3 Do you think the trainee/teacher showed a positive or negative attitude to the feedback you gave?**

<b>Session</b>	<b>DOS</b>	<b>Teacher</b>	<b>Teacher's Comments</b>
<b>A</b>	<b>DOS1 (Amy)</b>	<b>Sue</b>	Generally positive though she can be a bit resistant at times.
<b>E</b>	<b>DOS1 (Amy)</b>	<b>Adrian</b>	Very positively. Adrian is always easy to talk to and takes up suggestions in a positive way.
<b>B</b>	<b>DOS2 (Richard)</b>	<b>John</b>	Positive - he is confident enough to be able to take suggestions quite well.
<b>G</b>	<b>DOS2 (Richard)</b>	<b>Anna</b>	Positive - she is more like a trainee than a teacher as she's so new. Very anxious for feedback.
<b>C</b>	<b>DOS3 (Rosie)</b>	<b>Judy</b>	Positive - although I had no real criticisms to make as Judy is very experienced.
<b>D</b>	<b>DOS4 (Sonya)</b>	<b>Jack</b>	Positive - he is very anxious to improve - he asked if he could have the video so he could go over the points we'd discussed.
<b>F</b>	<b>DOS4 (Sonya)</b>	<b>Donna</b>	A bit anxious or defensive.
<b>H</b>	<b>DOS5 (Gerry)</b>	<b>Wanda</b>	Positive - didn't seem to mind the critical points much though did argue the toss at times.
<b>I</b>	<b>DOS6 (Jackie)</b>	<b>Clare</b>	Positive - but then I didn't make many critical comments.

Table 11.

**Q4 What were your aims for the feedback session? What did you want to happen?**

**Q5 To what extent did you feel you achieved your aims? Did you do what you wanted to do?**

Session	DOS	Teacher	Teacher's Comments
<b>A</b>	<b>DOS1 (Amy)</b>	<b>Sue</b>	<p><b>Q4:</b> I wanted to make Sue feel confident about what she's doing and to make a few points about how she can improve. It was not a wonderful lesson but I think generally Sue is a popular teacher who with support will continue to improve.</p> <p><b>Q5:</b> Generally it went as planned. Sue was receptive and I managed to make the points I wanted.</p>
<b>E</b>	<b>DOS1 (Amy)</b>	<b>Adrian</b>	<p><b>Q4:</b> I wanted to make Adrian feel he is doing a good job - which he is. I'd like him to feel he has my support.</p> <p><b>Q5:</b> The session went well - Adrian is an easy colleague to work with and very conscientious so open to any suggestions in a non-defensive way.</p>
<b>B</b>	<b>DOS2 (Richard)</b>	<b>John</b>	<p><b>Q4:</b> I was aiming to let John know I thought his lesson was fine and that he is doing well in his first teaching post with Bell.</p> <p><b>Q5:</b> It went as planned - John was confident and easy to talk to.</p>
<b>G</b>	<b>DOS2 (Richard)</b>	<b>Anna</b>	<p><b>Q4:</b> I wanted to give Anna confidence as she is not doing too well with what is quite a difficult class.</p> <p><b>Q5:</b> I hope I was positive enough to make her feel more confident with her class till the end of the course.</p>

<b>C</b>	<b>DOS3 (Rosie)</b>	<b>Judy</b>	<p><b>Q4:</b> My aim was to conduct the session in a ‘professional’ way - to effect a fruitful exchange of views.</p> <p><b>Q5:</b> I think I achieved my aims - we had a very good discussion.</p>
<b>D</b>	<b>DOS4 (Sonya)</b>	<b>Jack</b>	<p><b>Q4:</b> I was trying to help John get to grips with this group of Thai students. There were a number of small points he needs to be aware of.</p> <p><b>Q5:</b> He was very receptive and keen to pick up any ideas, so I think I did achieve my aim.</p>
<b>F</b>	<b>DOS4 (Sonya)</b>	<b>Donna</b>	<p><b>Q4:</b> As a new DOS I was anxious to get through the checklist so I would have a good record for the files. My aim with Donna was to make her feel good about her lesson as she’s a bit anxious.</p> <p><b>Q5:</b> Generally it was fine with Donna taking on board suggestions.</p>
<b>H</b>	<b>DOS5 (Gerry)</b>	<b>Wanda</b>	<p><b>Q4:</b> Mainly I wanted to appear supportive.</p> <p><b>Q5:</b> It’s was quite easy with Wanda as she is very happy to receive feedback. It was a lot more difficult with Lynne (another teacher) ‘cos I think she thinks she should be DOS and isn’t really interested in anything I have to say.</p>
<b>I</b>	<b>DOS6 (Jackie)</b>	<b>Clare</b>	<p><b>Q4:</b> I don’t think I’d thought out my aims well enough in advance except to be supportive to Clare.</p> <p><b>Q5:</b> The lesson was not very well managed and I should have picked up on that. As it was I don’t think my feedback was very helpful - except to make Clare feel quite good about her lesson.</p>

Table 12.

**Q6 Do you feel your relationship with the trainee/teacher to be ‘special’ when you are giving feedback? How would you describe the relationship?**

<b>DOS</b>	<b>Teacher’s Comments</b>
<b>DOS1 (Amy)</b>	Yes, I feel it is a special relationship - unique really. I think that my main role is to support the teachers and I have to do that at the same time as developing them as teachers. It could be quite difficult as a new DOS with people such as Adrian who I was a teacher with last year. But it’s fine - because I’ve been well-briefed with the briefing sessions and the Handbook etc. I feel I know what I’m doing and the teachers are very nice. It feels a bit strange and formal but it’s fine.
<b>DOS2 (Richard)</b>	Yes, I feel that I am there to support and make sure that the teachers - especially new ones like John and Anna are doing a good enough job. In a way our first priority is the students and we have to make sure the teachers do as good a job as possible. At the same time you don’t want to destroy a weak teacher’s confidence - they have to be supported till the end of the course for the students’ sake.
<b>DOS3 (Rosie)</b>	I am very conscious of being the ‘DOS’ and I try to keep the feedback session as professional as possible. It’s quite tricky with someone like Judy who’s a bit older than me and though not technically as well-qualified has a lot of experience. I still think I have things to contribute and my job is to make sure that overall on the course the academic programme is as good as it can be.
<b>DOS4 (Sonya)</b>	Yes, very different in some ways. I’m very aware of my role as the one in charge of the programme and I’m obviously keen to help my teachers do the best they can for the students. I consciously try to be a bit more formal than usual but I hope I am also approachable.
<b>DOS5 (Gerry)</b>	Yes, I’m very conscious of my role as DOS, especially with very experienced teachers. I see my main role as supporting the teachers and making sure they are doing everything Bell expects them to do.

<b>DOS6 (Jackie)</b>	Yes, it's quite a responsibility to keep the teacher well-motivated and feeling supported and at the same time making sure that the classes are good and that the children and their parents are happy. It is through the feedback sessions that I have the chance to monitor and, I hope, raise standards. So for those reasons it is a special relationship.
--------------------------	--

Table 13.

### Questionnaire given to teachers in the in-service sessions

I am doing research on feedback. Could you spend a few minutes completing this questionnaire. I promise that your remarks will be received in the strictest confidence. I will not pass on any of the information you may give individually, to your DOS or to any other member of the course team, and you will not be named in any published work.

I would like your opinion of the feedback on your lesson. Could you please tick/complete the following statements.

- 1 I found the feedback given by the DOS on my lesson useful.
- 2 I did not find the feedback given by the DOS on my lesson very useful.
- 3 While the DOS was giving me feedback I felt ....
- 4 Now, after feedback, I feel ....

Any other comments?

Questionnaire 2.

### Teachers' responses to the questionnaire

The following responses were received from the teachers whose lessons were observed, and who received feedback in the sessions which were recorded. For the questions see Questionnaire 2, immediately above.

Session	DOS	Teacher	Teacher's Comments
<b>A</b>	<b>DOS1</b> <b>(Amy)</b>	<b>Sue</b>	<p>Ticked 1.</p> <p>5. .... positive - she was very encouraging.</p> <p>6. .... that it was helpful. She gave me some good ideas which I will use the next time I do this lesson.</p> <p>Amy is always extremely approachable, and is always willing to give us enough time as we need.</p> <p>She is also prepared to listen to our opinions/views.</p>
<b>E</b>	<b>DOS1</b> <b>(Amy)</b>	<b>Adrian</b>	<p>Ticked 1.</p> <p>5. I felt Amy was aware of what I'm like as a teacher and knew my students quite well. We discussed the lesson and how I felt about it, so I could express whatever I wanted to say.</p> <p>6. Amy evaluated the lesson fairly and discussed with me how I felt the lesson had gone. She praised what was good and suggested ways of making my lessons better.</p> <p>Amy is a sound DOS - she knows her job and will go out of her way to help you. I have worked with Amy on two courses. Last year we were fellow EFL tutors and this year she has been my DOS. So, obviously a friendly working relationship has been established and I have total respect for Amy as she is the total professional, and I have no problem asking for help in and out of the feedback session.</p>

<b>B</b>	<b>DOS2 (Richard)</b>	<b>John</b>	<p>Ticked 1.</p> <p>5..... fine. I think it was a fair exchange of views.</p> <p>6 ..... fine. I feel that Richard and I have a different way of working now we are colleagues. I see observation as my chance to prove myself as a professional teacher.</p>
<b>G</b>	<b>DOS2 (Richard)</b>	<b>Anna</b>	<p>Ticked 1.</p> <p>5. .... the points raised during the feedback session will be very helpful for future teaching.</p> <p>6. .... I received constructive criticism which meant I went away feeling positive about my lesson but having learnt how I could improve.</p> <p>Feedback sessions give you another person's perspective and make you think about points you wouldn't otherwise have thought of. I also felt able to express myself.</p>
<b>C</b>	<b>DOS3 (Rosie)</b>	<b>Judy</b>	<p>Ticked 1.</p> <p>5..... very comfortable. Rosie has just done the Dip. and so has a lot of fresh ideas to bring to the discussion.</p> <p>6. ... we had a chance as fellow professionals to talk about what was best for the class. I think she appreciates my efforts in the classroom and feels I am doing a good job.</p>

<b>D</b>	<b>DOS4 (Sonya)</b>	<b>Jack</b>	<p>Ticked 1.</p> <p>5. .... credit was given me for the things I achieved in the lesson. Several critical comments were made and, what's more, were followed up with positive suggestions about what I could do to improve.</p> <p>6. .... it ended on a positive note. It was conducted in a pleasant way.</p> <p>There was no rush. We used the observation sheet as a framework and it is very thorough, often covering similar points twice over so nothing could be missed.</p>
<b>F</b>	<b>DOS4 (Sonya)</b>	<b>Donna</b>	<p>Ticked 1.</p> <p>5 .....generally positive with concrete suggestions for improving my technique. For example with the game which wasn't so successful Sonya had ideas on how to improve it and was very careful to say it had potential and I shouldn't scrap it.</p> <p>6. It was helpful because of the suggestions made by Sonya and also because it gave me a chance to rationalise and say why I did what I did. I feel able to express my feelings and point of view because Sonya is quite approachable.</p>
<b>H</b>	<b>DOS5 (Gerry)</b>	<b>Wanda</b>	<p>Ticked 1.</p> <p>5. .... totally able to express my feeling and Gerry let me do a lot of the talking which helped me clearly to see the faults and how to change them as well as the good.</p> <p>6. I came away from the session feeling generally happy about my teaching and inspired to improve.</p> <p>I think the feedback was generally helpful as Gerry was very complimentary about the lesson and</p>



			encouraged me to say - not what was wrong with it but how I could have improved it.
<b>I</b>	<b>DOS6 (Jackie)</b>	<b>Clare</b>	<p>Ticked 1.</p> <p>5. .... fine, Jackie was very encouraging. (I felt rather fake under camera - I was filmed).</p> <p>6. .... the session was very helpful. It is interesting to hear different approaches to the lesson. Jackie is always open to suggestion.</p>

Table 14.

## APPENDIX 5



The ***Bell*** Language Schools

### Lesson Review Form

<b>TEACHER'S NAME:</b>  <b>Course:</b> <b>Date:</b>  <b>Main focus of lesson:</b>	<b>Observed by:</b>  <b>Level of Class:</b> <b>No. of Students:</b>
--	--

1	<b>Planning</b>  Did this lesson fit within the Scheme Of Work?	
2	<b>Aims &amp; Objectives</b>  Were they clear?	
3	<b>Aims &amp; Objectives</b>  Were they achieved?	
4	<b>Communication - Was it clear when:</b>  - giving and checking instructions - explaining and responding to students' questions - presenting new language	
5	<b>Rapport</b>	
6	<b>Classroom Management</b>	
7	<b>Variety and Pace</b>  Was it appropriate for this class?	

<b>8</b>	<b>Resources/Materials</b>  Were they appropriate for this class?	
<b>9</b>	<b>Flexibility</b>  If it was necessary, the lesson plan was modified in response to student reactions and circumstances.	
<b>10</b>	<b>Motivation/Participation</b>  Were the students motivated and given an opportunity to participate?	
<b>11</b>	<b>Language Awareness/Error Correction</b>  When necessary, a high level of language awareness in grammar, vocabulary and phonology was demonstrated and errors corrected as appropriate.	
	<b>Other Points</b>	
	<b>Summary</b>	